

A SLAVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

ERNEST DE LANCEY PIERSON

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A SLAVE
OF
CIRCUMSTANCES

A STORY OF NEW YORK

BY

ERNEST DE LANCEY PIERSON



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To
WILL PHILIP HOOPER

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED WITH THE ESTEEM AND
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

THE FALL OF LINDA JEX

(IN PREPARATION),

A SLAVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG MAN IN MADISON SQUARE.

A BURST of music from a brilliantly lighted house facing Madison Square roused a young man who had been sleeping for the past half hour on one of the hard benches under the electric lamps. He yawned, opened his eyes wearily, and shuffled off in the direction of the lights and of the echoes of Strauss that sounded pleasantly in the cold, deserted square. When he arrived at the great stone steps leading up to the spacious doorway of the house, he sat down. You could then see that he was a very shabby young man, cowed and sullen-looking, and that he wore an old pair of carpet slippers instead of shoes, and was generally disreputable.

Having seated himself on the lowest step as comfortably as he could, he began a careful search of all his pockets and the linings of his coat, and then put what he had found into his hat. There was a broken clay pipe, a piece of a cigar, an old pocket-book, and a dirty visiting card. He threw the first three things into the middle of the street, but held the last for some time between his thumb and finger, studying it.

"Huh!" he grunted; "last relic of a respectable existence! I guess I shan't need you any more," and his face was thoughtful as he tore the card up, and looked out on the cold square, peopled only with shadows and outcasts like himself. Then he swore softly under his breath, and seemed to feel much relieved. His very shabby hat being removed, the sharp October breeze disturbed a tangle of brown curls that were rather wasted on such a dilapidated object. His face, too, was rather mild-looking for a night-owl; though it was

pale and haggard. He hummed the tune over to himself, as he sat there, keeping time with his slippered feet on the pavement.

"If I had a waltz I might feel warmer," he said to himself; "but I don't know but the supper that comes afterwards would be more of a treat, taking one consideration with another. The question just now before the house is, shall I break a window and thus earn my board and lodging? or shall I knock down the first man I see and provide for at least six months of the impenetrable future? No, that won't do, for the man might strike back; I guess I'll decide in favor of the window."

As he sat there soliloquizing, a stout man in a gibus hat and a very light overcoat came along. He was an excellent type of the sleek, easy-going man-about-town, and carried himself moreover in stiff military style. Something about the young man on the step seemed to attract his attention, for he stopped under the street lamp to look back at the lonely, huddled-up, crouching figure. The careful inspection he gave the waif seemed to meet with his approval, for he nodded to himself, and then, swinging his cane in a neatly-gloved hand, disappeared around the corner. The young man on the steps had watched the coming and going of this sleek, well-fed apparition. By-and-by he began to nod, and soon his head drooped and he fell into a troubled doze, while the breeze made merry with his rags and with the tangled curls that swept his forehead. It may have been an hour or perhaps only ten minutes that he lay in this condition. When he woke up it was to find that the provokingly prosperous-looking individual in the light overcoat had again appeared under the lamp-post, and had resumed his scrutinizing and speculative examination. He thought that perhaps he might be dreaming, and closed his eyes. Opening them quickly again, he found the same man in the same place, still regarding him with the same look of half inquiry.

"And who might you be?" asked the well-dressed stranger, continuing his mental inventory of the shabby young man, including the slippers.

"None of your business," was the prompt reply, as he gathered himself and his rags together, and prepared to shuffle

away. "If these steps belong to you, take 'em. They're none too comfortable to sleep on."

"Well, where are you going?" persisted the other.

"To the devil, where you can go too," sullenly, as he shuffled away, walking very slowly lest he should lose his slippers, which flapped about his feet and threatened to fall off.

The man in the light overcoat burst into a loud laugh that startled the outcasts on the benches in the square, and called forth some profanity from the shabby young man.

"Come, come," he said, good-naturedly; "you're too low down in the world to be cheeky, my good fellow."

"Don't 'good-fellow' me," was the savage reply; "I'm not your lackey;" and he shook off the detaining hand that rested lightly on his arm. "What do you want of me, anyway?"

"You shall know in a moment, my fiery young friend. To be brief, I should like to be of service to you. I see you are down, and I would like to put you on your legs again."

The young man examined him from head to foot. "You must be a new type of a philanthropist. The last one I met wore goloshes, and gave me a tract on gluttony. What kind of literature do you distribute to suffering humanity?" with a sneer.

The other laughed. "I assure you that I am a different style of Samaritan than you have ever encountered before. Allow me to introduce myself to you," and the stranger made an elaborate bow; "Captain Rivington Shrike, at your service."

"I cannot give you my card," said the other, "because I have just torn the last one up," looking back at the pieces of pasteboard that were fluttering over the walk. "I thought I shouldn't need it any longer, or the name either."

"But really, my dear fellow, a man must have some kind of a name; he can't get along very well without it, don't you know?"

"I am not so sure about that," said the ragged young man, blinking like an owl in the light of the street-lamp; "I never got any good out of the name I threw away. I think I'll try a new one and see if I don't have any better luck."

"Very sensible of you, I am sure," said the captain, who seemed vastly amused. "but I must call you something."

"Call me anything you like," preparing to move off again.

"Just one moment! Where are you going?"

"You are, it strikes me, unnecessarily curious. I am going to find an alley-way where I can sleep. What are you trying to get out of me?"

"I am going to see that to-night you are better lodged, to begin with. I may decide to do more, but that will depend pretty much on yourself."

"Nothing crooked, is it?" asked the other suspiciously; "because I had an opportunity to go into the sawdust game with a most accomplished swindler."

"We will talk about that part of the programme some other time. I have no doubt that we shall get along famously together. Now, what do you want me to call you?"

"Oh, most anything will do. One name is just as good as another to me."

"Well, I'll call you John Brent, if you don't mind. It's not an original name with me, but it sounds well; how do you like it?"

"It's a kind of a full-dress name for a man of my limited wardrobe, but I guess it will fit for the present."

"I got it out of some novel," said the Captain, "so it ought to be good."

"Having given me a name, what is the next move?" scrutinizing the mild blue eyes and round, smiling face that confronted him. "If you are interested in me—and you appear to be—I warn you now, at the start, that I am just as likely to repay any kindness you may do me with ingratitude as not. Now," relapsing into sullenness, "you can use your own discretion about playing the good Samaritan."

"I am not going to ask for any confidences. I have knocked about the world a good deal, and am a tolerable judge of faces. Keep all your secrets locked up, if you will; I shall not search for the key. God knows, we all have our little burying-grounds that we don't care to have disturbed. I have a select assortment of ghosts I don't want to see myself. It is a very fortunate thing for you that we met, however."

"For you or me?"

"Well, for both of us. From this hour I will begin and see if I can improve your condition."

"There's a splendid field for your labors," said the young man, with a good deal of bitterness in his voice. "You cannot begin your miracles too soon to suit me."

"I may come in a questionable shape for a good fairy," was the reply; "but I am just as well equipped for the task. You are in rags, no one will dispute. Very well, you shall shine in broadcloth. You have been living like the prodigal, on husks."

"No! free lunches," interrupted the other, with a grim attempt at humor.

The Captain frowned at this irrelevancy in the midst of his oratory, and went on:

"Henceforth you shall become intimately acquainted with the flavor of Strasbourg pie; in short, you shall live as befits a man of gentle blood, for, in spite of the drawbacks in the way of clothes and"—looking at the slippers—"shoes, I am sure you have at some time in your life been an ornamental if not valuable member of society. We shall see what a fresh start will do for you. In the first place——"

The Captain's speech was cut short, as the ponderous door of the great house opened, showing a spacious hall lit by brass lanterns and glittering candelabras, and, on either side, lines of lackeys in canary-colored liveries.

About the lights the departing guests fluttered like gay moths. The carriages began to arrive suddenly before the door, and Captain Shrike thought it advisable to seek a less conspicuous position in the shadow of the stone lions guarding the entrance. John Brent, half-hidden by his friend's portly form, listlessly watched the stream of elegantly dressed men and women as they tripped down the stone steps, an avalanche of satins and broadcloths. He heard the tinkle of French boots and the rustle of starched skirts, but it was half in a doze, for he was very sleepy.

One by one the carriages swept away with their elegant burdens, and were swallowed up in the darkness. Two people—the last to go—stood on the steps waiting for their *coupé*—a lithe young girl, leaning on the arm of a stout, oily-looking man, whose face was expressive of extreme self-satisfaction and pomposity. He was talking to the lady in a strident voice, but she seemed to give little heed to his words. Her

face looked pale and tired in the light of the street-lamp. On the way to the carriage her soft plush mantle brushed John Brent as he crouched in the shadow. It seemed to rouse him up, and he turned and looked at her curiously.

"Who is that?" he asked, noticing that Captain Shrike had bowed to the couple.

"Take a good look at her," whispered the other; "that is the young lady you are going to marry."

Brent was about to reply to this remarkable speech, when the carriage-door slammed with a bang, and he felt the Captain's hand on his arm.

"Come," said the latter; "it is time I introduced you to the Impecunious Club."

CHAPTER II.

THE IMPECUNIOUS CLUB.

A CLEAN-LOOKING brick house faces Blackwell's Island in the upper part of the city. It is like all the other dwellings in Beekman Place, except that in front of the oak door there is a horse-block that looks like a cake of Castile soap, and that Venetian blinds of a peculiarly ugly green cover the windows.

Nothing at all suspicious about the edifice, you would say; and it looks as if it might be the home of some retired green-grocer who cared little for modern innovations. The back porch, which overlooks the copper-colored river, is a pleasant place from which to watch the shipping, provided you have no aversion to bilge-water, the odor of which always seems to hang in the air, and gets into everything at meals, and gives everyone a sailor-like smell. When the warm weather comes on, the German families who live on the river-front move their tables out in the back yard of an evening, eat indigestible suppers, consume an alarming amount of liquids, and have a general good time. In number 603, singing is often heard at a late hour; but otherwise it is quiet enough, and the neighbors seem rather proud that there is some mystery attached to its walls. The brass door-plate exhibits the name "J. F. Jones"; but who "Jones" is, the inhabitants of Beekman Place have never made any effort to find out, for they are mostly a hard-working set of householders, too intent on chasing the nimble dollar to waste time in detective work.

The inhabitants of 603 seemed to be mostly young men of fashion, who were generally seen coming out of the house in the afternoon, and who returned very late at night, after the majority of the good people on the block had been sleeping some hours. There is nothing suspicious about the young men, except that they dress better than anyone else in the street, and do not seem to have any work to do in particular.

In this house, in the second story back, John Brent awoke, just as a chirpy little brass clock on the mantelpiece began to strike the hour of twelve in shrill yet musical chimes. He yawned and looked about him doubtfully, wonderingly, and then rubbed his eyes for a moment and sat bolt upright in bed. The room was furnished with dignified simplicity. Everything was massive and elegant, and the two large windows commanded a fine view of the river and the shipping. Brent recalled the events of the preceding night slowly. He could remember well enough having met with a stranger in a light overcoat; also a beautiful face that flashed like a meteor through his brain; but that was all. Meanwhile, he lay very still, because he was a little afraid to move, lest the noisy brass clock might walk away on its smart little legs, and the furniture collapse and sink through the floor like a transformation scene in a pantomime. So he lay very still, and thought and wondered, and wondered and thought. At the end of five minutes' cogitation he had made up his mind not to be surprised at anything he saw or heard, but to take matters as they came, with a thankful heart. He had a philosophic mind, this young man, and to step from the gutter to such comfortable quarters astonished him for the nonce; but he was equal to the occasion. He got out of bed finally and went over to the pier-glass between the two windows and examined the reflection of a tall young man in a blue striped night-gown for some moments meditatively.

"Yes," he added, stroking a stubbly beard that sprouted on his chin; "same man! same man! I recognize the face at once. Didn't know but that *it* might have changed too, in the night. Glad it's all right; shouldn't know exactly how to get on with any other kind of a face. What I need in particular is a shave."

He made a face at himself in the glass, and hummed a comic-opera air as he proceeded to dress in some clothes he found at the foot of the bed. He wondered not a little what had become of his rags and the terrible slippers, but he found he had made a good exchange. The new suit fitted him nicely, and was decidedly more stylish in cut, if not so well ventilated as that which he had worn the day before. After he had completed his toilet he looked at himself again in the glass, and

the contemplation of his charms seemed to give him satisfaction, for he nodded several times approvingly. Blackwell's Island loomed up, with its sombre buildings, as he stood by the window and looked out on the muddy river.

"Well, I am glad I didn't wake up over there," with a shiver. "I shouldn't think anybody in this neighborhood would go wrong as long as those frowning buildings were in front of their noses."

The sputtering anthracite burning in the grate filled the room with a pleasant warmth, and he lingered in its glow as he looked meditatively about the apartment.

He noticed then for the first time that the only pictures in the place were a row of some twenty cabinet photographs in little oak frames, and that they were all of women. Had he fallen into a modern blue-beard's den? he wondered, as he went closer to examine the collection.

It was certainly not a gallery of national beauties, for the majority were elderly, far from good-looking, and dowdy to a degree. One portrait over the fire-place attracted his attention. It was that of a young girl of about twenty, an oval face framed in by a cluster of dark curls and lit by a pair of large, mournful eyes. Brent started at the sight of this picture as if the face had been a familiar one. Somewhere in his life he had met the owner of those eyes, but when and how he could not exactly recall, though he puzzled his brain for some time. Through his mind there flitted a number of faces which had figured in his past. Where had he seen her? In the Grand Theatre, Detroit, with her husband? No, the carpet-dealer's wife was fat and considerably over thirty. In the cars at Grand Rapids? No. In the ballet at Niblo's? Never! Was it a face singled out of a crowd—a Macy shop-girl? Was it—yes, he remembered now; he had seen her in the street, last night! It was she he had seen coming down the steps of the great house in Madison Square, with a soft light on her face, leaning on the arm of the stout man with the great diamond in his shirt, and the smirk, and the rough, coarse voice. To John Brent it seemed like a year since she had flashed by him. He found himself studying the picture attentively. There was no name on the card, no clew to her identity; only a number that told nothing. How came the por-

trait in that room? What relation did she bear to the jaunty man-about-town he had met the night before? he found himself wondering. Somehow he was not at all pleased to find her picture on Captain Shrike's walls; it was out of place.

"Don't let me disturb you," said a voice at his elbow; "I am glad you have the good taste to pick out the gem of my collection."

The very man he had been thinking about stood before him, nodding and smiling in a friendly way.

"You recognize our little friend of last evening?" he added, seating himself leisurely in the most comfortable chair in the room, and lighting a cigarette with a lazy hand. "She is rather pretty."

"Well, yes," said Brent; and then he looked at the picture again, and at Shrike's still smiling face, and sat down and began drumming on the top of the table nervously with his fingers. He wanted to say something, and did not know exactly how to begin.

"Captain," he finally broke in, "before we go any further, let us come to some kind of an understanding. I know too much of the world and of men to believe that you have taken me in from any disinterested motives. I used to believe in such unselfish philanthropy; I don't any more. That was before I came to New York. The question now suggests itself forcibly, What are you going to do for me, and what am I going to do for you?"

"Exactly," said the captain, smiling and displaying a very even set of teeth. "You are quite right in thinking that my motives are purely selfish. I have a project on hand, and I needed help to carry it out. Fate or the devil threw you into my hands; I thought you were the very man for my purpose; so here you are, and here I am."

"Well, before we go any further," said Brent, impatiently, "what is the Impecunious Club?"

"As you will in all probability become a member, it is only right you should know. The Impecunious Club is a secret society, and was founded by me in 1886, or rather, I thought of the plan for the club in that year. When I started it, there were only five members; it was finally increased to twelve, and twelve has been the limit ever since. To begin

with, we were all men of good family and good looks, but confoundedly poor, and having been born with expensive tastes we made up our minds that the society which stimulated extravagance in living should gratify those tastes. I was the man who solved the problem how that was possible to be done, and the result is that I have enriched an army of impecunious friends, who now enjoy the luxuries they were born to inherit. The club was founded to fill a long-felt financial want. I had made a careful study of social life in all its branches, and had come to the conclusion that too much money was being taken out of the country by foreign noblemen and adventurers of doubtful character; in other words, that too much American money was being diverted from its lawful channels. It was with a view to putting a stop to these depredations from abroad that I founded the Impecunious Club." Captain Shrike rolled out the last sentence as triumphantly as if he were announcing the discovery of a new continent.

"In other words," continued the captain, "the members of this club are offered every facility to marry young women of property, whose only misfortune is that they are rich. The membership of the club is strictly limited to twelve. You, for instance, will fill the place of a gentleman who has just left us."

"Dead?" asked Brent.

"No, next thing—married," said the other, grinning amiably. "That's the way the beggars all do. Go off and leave me, one by one. Before the year's out I expect an entirely new set of men. You will be gone, for one," with a laugh.

"Then, if I join the club—?"

"You will be able to dress well, eat well, and sleep well, as far as your conscience is concerned."

"And how is all this paid for?"

"Very simple, very! All you have to do when you marry is to sign an agreement promising to pay into the treasury of the club ten per cent of the income you receive. See?"

"Yes, I see;" and the other's face grew very thoughtful. "But what I don't see is, how you find men who are ready to go into this scheme for trapping girls into marriage."

"You would be surprised to know that such monsters are

very plentiful in New York society. It is, after all, a very easy way of making a fortune. Now, I leave it to you."

"Yes, I suppose it is, when you come down to a question of pure calculation. But, on the other hand, you are consigning these people to a life of misery."

"I am not so sure of that. You look at the matter from an entirely American point of view. Schopenhauer will bear me out in saying that a marriage is just as likely to prove happy, even if the contracting parties have never met until they reach the church-door. Besides, under the existing state of things in society, it is possible for people to live for years in the same house and never see each other from one year's end till the next. All a man in society asks for is, that his wife shall speak good grammar, look well at the head of a table, dress well, be discreet in her flirtations, if she have any, and not be of a too inquiring mind. I don't see why husbands of the Impecunious-Club brand are not just as good as any in the market. The modern wife is not exacting; she knows the weakness of humanity, and is not looking for a demigod."

"Yet a man must be wanting in self-respect who lends himself to such a scheme," said Brent, a little faintly; for somehow the sentences that he wanted to use did not formulate quickly.

"Well, see if you can't compromise with your conscience," said Shrike, with something of a sneering tone in his voice; "there is certainly no compulsion in the matter," as he rose to go, with a yawn. "In case you want to back out—and I sincerely trust you will not be so foolish, for your own sake,—why, you will find your—your—the garments you had on last night in yonder closet," with a wave of the hand; "and I don't mind asking my coachman to drop you off at the place where I found you in Madison Square."

"But, Captain—" faltered the young man, as visions of that cold step arose forcibly in his mind.

"There, there," said the other, good-naturedly, "don't say another word until you have had some breakfast. You can't be heroic on an empty stomach, and I am going to give you all the chance in the world to make up your mind," as he bustled to the door. "After you have done justice to our frugal fare, and want to discuss the matter over calmly, just ring

the bell; I shall be down in the library;" and this peculiar individual disappeared in a flash of blue and yellow through the doorway, leaving a very bewildered young man behind him.

Brent sat down and eyed the fire thoughtfully. He was thinking very hard, and was in a state of hesitancy. His views of honor were perfectly correct and sound, but taking his circumstances into consideration the captain's offer was a strong temptation. On the one hand was want and misery, on the other a life of ease and luxury. Most young men of his age, placed in the same position, would not have hesitated a moment about accepting the latter. Brent had somewhere—perhaps at a mother's knee—acquired some strong views regarding honor, though he did not always have the courage of his convictions. He wanted to be strong, but his will-power was weak; and here was a struggle that needed all his best energies and heroism of purpose.

After a while he went over to the closet and looked in. The sight of the familiar old rags and the carpet slippers embroidered with cabbage roses revived all the misery he had passed through. Could he go back to it now? he asked himself. It must have been the sight of those slippers that made him slam the closet-door with an oath, and resume his old place by the fire.

"Shall I put on those rags again?" he said to himself.

Then his eyes wandered over the glossy diagonal coat he was wearing, and the neatly-fitting trousers; and he sighed. The portrait over the mantelpiece again seemed to interest him, for his eyes rested on it for some time, as if the contemplation gave him pleasure; and at intervals he found his eyes wandering to the girl's pure face, as if he would like to ask her help.

A little Russia-leather book was lying on the table, and in an absent-minded way his fingers strayed among its leaves. It was an address book, he could see, and contained only the names of women, some forty in all. He understood the meaning of the book at once; it was the directory of the eligible young ladies of property of New York, who were shining marks for the members of the Impecunious Club. Those who had large properties had their names marked with a star, and

opposite each was the amount of her income. Brent felt an insatiable desire to know if the young lady who looked down at him so pleasantly from above the fire-place was on the list. He noted the number on the rim of the photograph, and saw that it corresponded with one in the book. There he read, "Tillinghurst, Marcia; No. 66, \$000,04." By examining the book he found that the figures placed after each name were intended to be read backwards, so that No. 66 was credited with an income of forty thousand.

"So that is the young lady Captain Shrike expects me to marry," he said to himself, as his eyes wandered from the name in the book to the picture on the wall, and then back again.

He felt rather ashamed of himself whenever he encountered those dark eyes, so he slammed the directory on the table, and strode over to the window to divert his thoughts. He was standing there, when a neat old woman entered and laid out a savory breakfast on the table, retiring as silently as she came.

Brent was looking out at the muddy river, thinking up some noble sentiment to floor Captain Shrike with when he saw him—a speech that would cause that amiable villain to writhe with shame. In the midst of manufacturing his rhetorical torpedo, however, he got a whiff of the fried chicken smoking on the table, and somehow his sentimental and heroic metaphors got mixed, and the next thing he knew he was burning his tongue over a cup of steaming mocha.

When he had quite finished the meal—and never was a repast enjoyed more, for it was twenty-four hours since he had tasted food—he found himself again looking at the gloomy buildings of Blackwell's Island that loomed up over the sugar-bowl. The weather had changed since he had last seen the gray stone piles, the flagged courts, and close-shaven grass plots. A drizzling rain was falling now, and what had been a bright bit of background for the river and the shipping, was now a black blot, swimming in mist and rain.

"It would have been either that or the river if I had gone on much longer," he said to himself, with a grimace. "What is the difference?"

He went over to the corner and pulled the bell-rope almost savagely, filling the house with echoes.

"Well?" asked Captain Shrike, as he appeared leisurely in the doorway.

"I have made up my mind to stay," was the reply.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAKING OF A MILLIONAIRE.

As Captain Shrike drove down town with his protégé the next morning, he said, "It is now time that we played our first cards. I will show you how a millionaire may be manufactured in this great city on a very small amount of money. New York people, I have learned from experience, delight in being humbugged. Society here is the happy hunting-ground for the charlatans of all nations. It supports in regal style men and women who can't sing, and actors who can't act, and lends the protection of its purple to people of shady record and the offscourings of foreign nobility. The more of a humbug you are, the better are your chances of success. I'm a bit of a one myself," added the captain, with a grim smile, "and I advise you to become one too."

The carriage rolled into Fifth Avenue, and John Brent watched with interest the architectural panorama as it unfolded itself before his eyes. He was still a little bewildered at the sudden turn in his fortunes. The transition from the miseries of the old life to the lazy luxuries of the new, was certainly a pleasant change; yet he was a little worried at the price he must eventually pay for it all.

Captain Shrike, noticing that he was preoccupied, imagined that he had begun already to repent of his bargain.

"Come, come, this won't do," nudging him with a very sharp elbow. "Don't pull such a long face; you are not going to be married to-day, don't you know. And I say," pointing suddenly out of the window, "there is Papa Tillinghurst's house now. Ah, I thought that would rouse you, me boy," as the young man followed with his eyes the direction of the captain's expressive forefinger. "Now, isn't that a better lodging-place than a brown stone step? There's about a million dollars cemented in those walls, and the place was deuced cheap at that. Some time I shall be driving by the house as I am to-

day, and see you lolling up there in the bow-window; or perhaps you will live in the room over the library," continued the captain, in a provoking way. "What! you don't care? Mercy! what a peculiar man you are, to be sure! Why, the prospect of getting so much for so little ought to make you wild with delight."

"I wonder you have never tried for this brilliant prize yourself," said Brent slowly.

"Perhaps I may yet, if you don't seize the opportunity," the other replied, with a laugh. "I know that Papa Tillinghurst would be only too glad to have me for a son-in-law; in fact, he has said so before this. I wonder sometimes myself why I let such a good chance slip by. I am not in the habit of losing a good thing. Perhaps one reason is because the young lady herself don't fancy me particularly; but—oh, I say, just have a look at that little woman going up there on the right-hand side of the street."

A slender, black-eyed woman, in an English ulster of huge check pattern, was tripping by, leading a diminutive little terrier by a string.

"That is Mrs. Wilton," said Captain Shrike, "Mrs. Beverly Wilton, late of Belair, West Virginia. This is the first time I have seen her this year, unattached to a Southern general. She rarely goes unprovided with some old military bore, full of reminiscences of the civil war. I don't know where she gets such a large and unfailing supply of the article, but I suppose they have come North to fill up the magazines with war papers. I point Mrs. Wilton out to you because I admire her greatly. She is the most delightful little humbug of which this great city can boast. She has neither money nor beauty, and yet she has forced herself into a certain society, and is getting gradually a grip on the higher circles. Talk about putting your best foot forward! Why, she puts her whole body forward, so to speak. She shares a hall bedroom with another impecunious friend, up among the chimney-pots of a Broadway hotel. Then she gives receptions once a week. The proprietors let her have a reception-room on the second floor on Tuesdays, where you are regaled with Chatham Street claret, stale biscuits, and her reminiscences of high life at Belair. The de-

vices and ingenuity she uses to save money would fill a large volume. She would dress well if she had an income of three dollars a week; and if she ever consents to sell her soul, it will be for some new and wonderful garment that will make all the other women in town mad with envy. I heard a story of her the other day that was very amusing. It seems the hotel people wanted to charge her four dollars a week for a fire, and she knew that she could not afford it. Something had to be done, however, for the cold weather was coming on, and dresses were getting more *décolleté* than ever, so she hit upon this ingenious scheme. She expressed a great Saratoga trunk she owned to a neighboring wood-yard, and had it filled up with hickory logs to the brim. The trunk was about as large as a Central Park flat-building, so it held a great deal. She then had it expressed back to her, and the total cost of it all was not more than a dollar and a half. I tell you, Brent, I am positively awed by the Napoleonic way that woman goes about, deceiving the world in general, on such a meagre capital. As dinner-parties are a clear gain to her, she seldom loses one during the season. I think she must scent the smell of the cooking afar off, like an old war-horse does the smoke of battle. By Jove! I sometimes think I ought to marry her, 'pon my soul I do. We should make such a splendid pair to batten on society;" and the captain grew thoughtful, as if he was considering the scheme. "But I hope I have not been tiring you," to Brent.

"On the contrary, I have been very much interested. But where are we heading for now?" as the carriage rolled into Madison Square.

"First to the Madison Bank to deposit \$1000 in your name. You will find it convenient to have some money up-town to pay small bills with."

"Is it not risky to put so much money at the disposal of a man you have only known for twenty-four hours?" asked Brent. He was not at all displeased, however, with the fact of having funds again.

"Oh, no," the captain replied calmly; "I don't believe you would stoop to crime; you might be the cat's-paw of another, but not of your own accord."

The young man's face flushed at this frankness, but he said

nothing, as the carriage had by this time rolled up in front of the bank.

"My friend Brent," said Captain Shrike, after introducing him to the cashier when they had entered, "has most of his money tied up in Western securities. As soon as he is able to sell out to advantage I shall persuade him to bank here."

"I am quite sure we shall be able to take care of his money," was the reply. "Stock in the Madison is now forty above par."

The deposit was made, and they were bowed out.

"That cashier," said Shrike, as they got into the carriage again, "is a member of the Impecunious Club. I got him in myself, because I knew he would be invaluable to borrow money or securities from. Leave it to him to spread the report that you have large funds in the bank. It will be noised all over town in a week that a Western millionaire is in the market. My! what a rush will be made for you by match-making mammas as soon as you show your nose in society! How I do delight in imposing on these aristocrats!" and the captain rubbed the palms of his hands together and grinned.

Their next visit was to Carter & Kickshaw's, the great Fifth Avenue tailors, who boasted openly that they charged more for clothes than any other house in the city, and consequently had more orders on hand generally than they could fill. Here Brent allowed himself to be measured for a number of suits of clothes, suitable for every occasion; and Captain Shrike found a chance to whisper in the ear of the head of the firm that his friend was a Western millionaire, so they were at liberty to charge him the stiffest kind of prices.

"Old Kickshaw," he explained, when they were again in the carriage, "is a most infernal old rascal, but he gets the trade of all the rich men in the city, except your esteemed father-in-law elect, who has his clothes chopped out by some Sixth Avenue cloth-butcher; and it is therefore the proper caper to come here and be swindled."

"What was your reason for persuading me into getting that horrible orange-colored waistcoat?"

"Why, my dear fellow, that will be worth at least a thousand dollars to you, 'pon honor, as an advertisement. You see, it is a new thing, and you are probably the first man who

has had the temerity to order one from that cloth. The worthy nabobs are rushing there every day now to order their winter suits, and they will of course be shown specimens of that horrible stuff. The exclamations will be universal that it is frightful. Kickshaw will retaliate that he has just sold one to the Western millionaire, Mr. John Brent. The garrulous old liar will then fill them up with stories about your eccentricity and fabulous wealth, until they are all curious to see you. Oh! I assure you, twenty-five dollars was not thrown away on that nightmare of a garment."

"And am I to make a bill-board of myself for advertising purposes?" asked Brent, in a rather disgusted tone of voice.

"Come, come, that's not bad," said the captain, with a boisterous laugh. "Well, I don't know but you may regard yourself in that light. Have you never noticed that when a show is a particular humbug, it makes up for the deficiency by the gorgeousness of the lithographs and printing? Ha, ha! that's not bad, comparing yourself to a bill-board."

Brent frowned, but said nothing.

"You are not quite sure," continued Shrike, "whether you are doing right in embarking in this enterprise. I regret to see so much pride in a man of your years. I used to cherish a fine assortment of noble sentiments myself some years ago. They are pretty shop-worn now; for the world, the flesh, and the devil have conspired to kill nearly all the good there was in me." He did not speak as if he particularly regretted his lost illusions, but rather as if he was glad they were gone.

"In thinking over what you are pleased to call our enterprise," said Brent, "has it ever occurred to you that perhaps the young lady herself might put a veto on your plans at the last moment? Even while you are bargaining for her hand she may be in love with somebody else."

"Don't be alarmed, me boy. I have taken everything into consideration. I know her like a book, and am sure she is entirely unattached. In the first place, she hates society, and consequently has not had much of a chance of meeting anybody, unless in a clandestine way, and she is hardly the kind of a girl to fall in love with a coachman or a clerk in a dry-goods store."

"I should hardly think so."

"Now, you, I may say, are rather good-looking in an effeminate way; and, moreover, the history of your life is romantic. and will attract a young girl who has not dropped all her illusions."

"Why, what do you know about my past history?" Brent asked, quickly.

"Nothing further than last night. I have a fertile imagination, though, and it won't take me very long to fit you out with a romantic career that will make Haggard blush for his laurels. All you have to do is to go in and win. With the financial and moral support of the Impecunious Club, defeat is almost impossible. Bets of two to one are freely offered on your success, and no takers."

"How delightful!" exclaimed Brent, with a grimace. "How will the Club begin the campaign?"

"They will be of benefit to you in many ways. You have now a host of mysterious protectors, bent on your service. As they all move in the best sets, they will see that every report is circulated that is liable to advance your cause. I will teach you the sign by which you can recognize the members of the Club, wherever and whenever you meet them. In case of necessity you need have no compunctions about calling on them for aid, either to back up an assertion or should you run short of money. You will be sure to find them ready and willing to oblige. In a week, thanks to the efforts of this devoted band, half the women in New York society will have a curiosity to see you. Now, mark my words."

"You are certainly a remarkable man, Captain Shrike," said Brent, who was rather amazed at all he heard.

"After lunch," said Shrike, "I shall go over to the Argentine Club and propose your name. There you will get acquainted with all the richest men in town. For the present we shall allow you two hundred a month for pocket-money: properly managed, that ought to be enough. When you are in the Club, always smoke the most expensive cigars and drink the dearest wines, when you need such things. Tip the waiters with nothing less than a bank-note. They are the greatest gossips in the world, and will spread the story of your generosity. I will post you later about the Western securities you own. In speaking of your investments, do so in a

careless way, as if the very mention of money had become tiresome to you. I would also advise you to take an expensive pew in the Church of the Heavenly Hope, and go there regularly. Many a man have I known to leave a poker-game Sunday morning in order to get to that church. You see, it gives people who don't know you the impression that you are not altogether devoured with the greed of money-getting, and have begun to think of higher things. Oh! I tell you, it is a most paying investment. The rector, the Rev. Sebastian Satine, is always ready to distribute a hundred dollars or more among the poor of the parish, and being a man who visits a good deal among his parishioners, is sure to give you good advertising returns."

"You have laid out a very attractive programme for me," Brent said, as he concluded.

"In an hour I must be in Wall Street," looking at his watch; "I suppose you have never speculated?"

"Never."

"You don't look as if you had nerve enough for that sort of work. Well, I shall buy a little stock in your name for the present. It will give you some reputation on the Street, and will certainly not cost me any more. A few daring plunges at first will give the brokers something to talk about, and will be a good advertisement. But here is the Brunswick. We'll get out and have a snack," and he rapped on the window for the coachman to stop. "To-night," he added, "I shall want your society for a german or something that is to be given by Mrs. Axminster of Madison Avenue. It is time you took your first plunge in the Circean bowl. Miss 66 might turn up," meaningly, "and the game would begin. For this afternoon you can enjoy yourself as you think best. I shan't need you."

"You talk as if you had bought me," said Brent, with some bitterness in his voice.

The other laughed. "That's what it amounts to, in cold English, I suppose; and I am paying for you on the instalment plan."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FALL OF J. CUMMINGS RAWDON.

SOME time ago an enormous sign hung from a building on the north-west corner of Broadway and Canal Street, that could be read with ease five blocks away. The merchant who was so anxious to claim public recognition in this way was a pompous Englishman boasting of the high-sounding name of J. Cummings Rawdon; and he dealt in wholesale flour. His enemies—and he had a goodly number—were unkind enough to say that he was an escaped ticket-of-leave man; but, anyway, he had gravitated from behind the counter of a corner grocery-store to be the proprietor of a great and flourishing trade, with dealings in Australia and Europe, and a financial credit that seemed unimpeachable.

One day, up the steep stairs leading to the main offices of this establishment, a dingy and bedraggled looking pedler was toiling, all unmindful of the threatening signs on the walls that forbade gentlemen of his profession the building. He belonged to that irrepressible army who worry business men early and late. In his pack he carried a rich and varied assortment of suspenders, collar buttons, and odds-and-ends from Chatham Street auction-rooms. He seemed to be even more ragged than the generality of his class, and shuffled along, with eyes on the ground, as if he were momentarily expecting a kick, or had lost something. Arriving at the main-office floor he walked boldly into the private room of the great Rawdon himself, and attempted to sell to that eminent merchant a pair of green suspenders embroidered with shamrocks. To say that J. Cummings Rawdon was surprised would be to put it mildly. For a moment he stared at the ragged apparition as if in doubt whether or not to believe his senses. If his head clerk had asked for a day's leave of absence he could not have been more astonished.

"How—how did this creature get in here?" he finally found

strength to roar out. "Here, you," to one of the group of frightened clerks who sprang forward at the sound of his voice, "why don't you look who comes in here? Go to the cashier and get your wages. I'll see if I have got to support a lot of lazy dogs only to be insulted."

By this time the unfortunate pedler had been hustled out of the building with many a parting kick from the excited clerks, who left him swearing vociferously and vowing all manner of unpleasant things.

"Be glad you are not all of you discharged," said their employer, as they returned sheepishly to their desks. "The next time, off you go;" and they knew he meant it.

That evening, as J. Cummings Rawdon was walking up and down in front of the doorway of his building, waiting for his carriage to take him home for the day, he felt a hand laid suddenly on his arm. He turned and recognized the pedler who had roused his ire that very morning.

"How dare you?" he exclaimed, raising his heavy cane with a furious gesture.

"Drop that, governor," exclaimed the other, in a hoarse whisper, as he held the other's arm. "Drop it, I say;" and there was a look in the man's sharp little eyes that made the flour merchant tremble.

"What do you want with me? Don't keep me waiting," he stammered, cursing the fact that he saw no policeman.

"Just this, Mr. J. Cummings Rawdon. You had me kicked out of your place this morning same as you would a stray dog. Well, we don't always forget these things, nor forgive 'em. I'll make you crawl for this, some day, damn you!" and he was gone in the crowd.

"Bah!" was Rawdon's exclamation, as he brushed off his coat-sleeve, which still bore the marks of the pedler's dirty fingers. "Threats! idle threats!"

But somehow he was strangely thoughtful as he got into his coupé and rode up-town. Of course, he could afford to laugh at such a miserable creature; yet, for many nights afterward, he saw a fierce, hungry face in his dreams, and it worried him strangely.

Eight years from that time the commercial world was startled one morning with the news that the great house of J.

Cummings Rawdon had failed, with liabilities of over a million. No one would believe at first that the thing could be true. Rawdon had never been liked very much by his business acquaintances, for they envied him his phenomenal prosperity, and many were glad that he was overthrown. Rawdon, for some time previously, had been borrowing money to carry on his business; but he had hoped to weather the storm. He had depended largely on the established credit of the house to help him through the emergency, but some one seemed to be secretly at work to destroy his prestige, and it was necessary to pay an exorbitant interest for every loan. The crash came when he least expected it, and just at a time when he thought he saw the way clear through his difficulties. It was a crushing blow to the pompous pride and insolent love of power that had been the leading characteristics of his narrow existence. He had lorded it so long over his fellows that he felt all the more crushed and disgraced. Every cent had to be given up to his creditors, even the great gilt sign which had been his pride, and which had shone like a beacon of promise before his eyes when he rolled down-town every morning to his work.

A month after Rawdon's failure had been published to the world, he stood one morning on the corner of Canal Street, looking up listlessly at the building that had once been his own, but was now being remodelled and decorated for its new purchaser. A kind of mist crept into his eyes as he watched the painters and gilders moving about their work, standing unnoticed on the corner where he had fought so many financial battles, now a nobody lost in the crowd flowing back and forth. It was hard for him to begin life over again, now that youth and strength were no longer his, and old age was creeping on. He had been a hard, unfeeling man all his life. He could not point to one generous act in all his business career; yet now that his sceptre had gone from him, he sorrowed, even as might a dethroned king whose palace was dust, and whose throne was in the hands of the usurper.

"That's a pretty fine building," remarked a stout little man in a broadcloth suit, who had rolled out of the crowd and seemed to be interested in the painters' work.

"Yes," said Rawdon, in a surly voice,

"If the city keeps on growing the way it has for the last ten years, that property will be worth a sight of money," added the voluble stranger, who had made up his mind to talk. "I remember the old owner of this place well enough, and a pompous old party he was, to be sure. He was a man of about your build, I should think," not noticing the frown. "He called himself J. Cummings Rawdon, though I doubt if he ever come honestly by the name. Any man who would try to defraud his creditors the way he done wasn't a bit too good for anything."

Rawdon clinched his fingers nervously together, as if he would gladly have strangled the stout little stranger with the mocking, smiling face. He did his best to conceal his feelings, however, for he was a little curious to know what would be said of him, however unpleasant it might be.

"He was a regular howlin' swell," continued the loquacious little man; "drove as fine a team of horses as you ever see in your life, and lived in high old style up by Central Park. No one imagined he was going to play out in such a hurry."

"And what do you imagine the reason was for his sudden falling from power?" asked Rawdon, who was interested in spite of himself.

"Well, I understands it were all one man, and one only as brought this giant to grass."

"One man?"

"So I hear about town, and a most curious story it is. Sounds most like a yarn out of a book than anything else. It seems that, some eight years or so ago, this here Rawdon, as he called himself, had a visit from some poor devil of a pedler, a mean, low-down sort of a party, who forced his way into the great man's office; and what do you suppose happened then?"

"I can't imagine," Rawdon answered, feebly.

"Well, this pedler tried to sell the old chap a pair of suspenders, and got kicked out of the place in fine shape. But I suppose I'm tirin' you with all this stuff?" eyeing the ex-flour-dealer with curious glances.

"Not at all, not at all," Rawdon stammered. "On the contrary, I am quite interested in your anecdote."

"What does this low-lived pedler do after bein' kicked out

so handsomely? Did he feel like making J. Cummings Rawdon a Christmas present? Well, not much, he didn't. He nailed Rawdon that night as he was getting into his carriage. They had some hard words together. The pedler swore he would get square some day for being kicked out. He—"

But Rawdon had seized the little man by the arm firmly, and dragged him into the hall-way of the building.

"How do you know all this?" he stammered hoarsely. "Who in the devil's name are you?"

He was strangely excited, while the fat little individual never lost for a moment his smiling complacency.

"Who am I?" he asked, coolly shaking off the other's arm. "I don't see what that's got to do with the question; but you can have it just the same, if it will do you any good. The fact is, they are now in the act of hanging out my card in the front of the building;" and as Rawdon paused, half-stupefied in the dim light of the hall, the little man slipped by him and up the stairs littered with the debris of sawdust and shavings.

The ex-flour-dealer looked after the retreating figure with bewilderment written on his countenance. It had all happened in such a short space of time that he could hardly realize what had taken place. But he knew that he had met his enemy face to face, the unseen power that had worked silently against him all the past five or six years, the hidden foe who had undermined the foundations of his credit, until the structure that had withstood so many financial storms toppled to its fall and overwhelmed him in the ruins. Why had he not choked that little grinning devil when he was in his power, he asked himself, stung with the memory of the other's taunts. At that moment he could have committed murder. When cooler reflection came it showed him the helplessness of his condition. A ruined man, he had no means of revenge. The mercy he had shown his rivals in the past was being meted out to him. The encounter seemed to have prematurely aged him, as he stumbled out into the noise and jar of the street with despair in his heart. He looked up with an unsteady glance at the name of the man who had ruined him. Two sturdy workmen were just swinging the heavy

sign into place under the second-story windows. Rawdon felt a strange eagerness to know the name of the man who, alone and unaided, had been able to pull down the great business it had taken so many years to establish. He crossed the street to the shadow of a friendly awning where he could see the building without being a conspicuous figure in the crowd. Others besides himself had gathered around the corner to see the great sign go up, but they were actuated by a different curiosity than he. They assembled in groups, chatting about the building, and chaffing the workmen over their slowness—a good-natured crowd such as springs up so mysteriously in a New York street when a horse falls down or a child is run over, coming from no one knows where, and disappearing as strangely as it came. It seemed to Rawdon, standing in the shadow of the opposite building, that the workmen dawdled over their work, and he grew impatient and more angry. At last the sign was swung into place, brighter, larger, gaudier than the old familiar one that had greeted him for years. He read the name with swimming eyes. The great Roman capitals seemed floating in fire.

JOHN TILLINGHURST.

GENERAL BROKER.

That was all. Just then he caught sight of a pair of beady eyes peering at him over the gilt edge of the sign, and a round, grinning face. It seemed to him that those fat lips were moving, that they were saying, "Damn you, I've made you crawl." With an oath he slunk away in the crowd, and from that hour the business world heard no more of J. Cummings Rawdon.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE ARGENTINE CLUB.

"I SHALL certainly die laughing," exclaimed Freddy Pixley, overcome with hilarity, as he rolled about in the leather-covered chair he was sitting in. Such members of the club as were trying to read the morning's papers looked at the young man and scowled; some even swore mildly to themselves.

"What idiotic nonsense are you giggling at now, Freddy?" asked Captain Shrike, who had just entered, and was leaning against the edge of the table.

"Why, you see, Shrike," answered Pixley, as soon as he had recovered his breath, "I laid a wager with Bleek De Peyster just now, as we sat here, that the first person to pass the window during the next quarter of an hour would be black, and he bet that he, she, or it would be white; and only think," with another uncontrollable fit of laughter, "if along didn't come a Chinaman; and now Bleek wants to declare the bet off. I want you to be the referee in the matter. Any fool ought to know that a Chinaman is nearer black than white. You are just in time to decide, for I don't think it is a square—" stopping to adjust a lurid cravat of black and orange stripes that had worked its way over his ears during his contortions.

"Oh, you would like me to be referee, would you?" said Captain Shrike, admiring his shoes. "I shall certainly not encourage you in your silly bets."

"Come now, Shrike, you are real unfriendly."

"Not a bit of it; but I always want to sit down on you when you try to make an ass of yourself. Can't you get rid of your money in any other way than by making silly bets? Better a good deal buy lottery tickets or start a daily paper or—or—give it to me."

"Oh, yes," said Freddy, giggling again, "I know you always

spend your money sensibly, you do! Oh, you rascal," poking the captain in the ribs, much to that gentleman's disgust, "I have found out how you while away the weary hours."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't, eh? You don't want to know. Why, my boy, it's all over town, pon my honor. West Thirty-fourth Street—second flat—deep mourning—yellow curls! Oh, what a sly dog you are, to be sure!" And young Mr. Pixley again doubled himself up with mirth, while Captain Shrike looked savage enough to brain a baby.

It was almost eleven o'clock in the morning, and only a few of the older members of the Argentine Club, who had outlived the possibility of sleeping late, had put in an appearance.

Freddy Pixley, better known in the club under the sobriquet of "XX.," because his father's fortune had been made out of a famous ale of that brand, sat in an embrasure of the window, looking out on Fifth Avenue. In appearance he was a short, stubby little man, with sandy hair and a pink complexion. Though he dressed with about the same taste as a stable boy or a horse jockey, his face expressed more weakness than depravity. Had he been born with a pewter spoon in his mouth instead of a gold one, it is quite possible that in the end he would have made a valuable member of the community. As it was, the very kindness of his nature led him into snares and pitfalls, which friends and acquaintances were always ready to spread for him. He was splendid game for the thousands of men and women who make capital out of the vanities of their fellow-creatures. Impecunious club men knew him to be a "pigeon" whom it required little strategy to work; and women of the world and half-world found they could easily twist the little millionaire around their dainty fingers.

Yet, in spite of all the drains upon his purse, his fortune steadily increased and multiplied. The judicious investments made by the old brewer continued to reap a golden harvest, and the wonderful luck that had attended him in the last years of his life had become the heritage of the son. Freddy never let the cares of business worry him any, leaving the entire charge of his affairs in the hands of some impecunious relatives, who, strange as it may seem, did the best for his interests,

He lived in a modest house in Irving Place, alone with his sister, a young lady whose mission in the world was to keep match-making mammas from marrying him off to their daughters. Freddy had managed so far to elude the matrimonial noose, but he had had many narrow escapes. Lovely women of the very bluest blood had fainted again and again in his arms, and allowed him to save them from the waves, at every resort on the coast worth mentioning. Young ladies of blood not so blue had offered even more tempting invitations to matrimony ; but though he was no modern St. Anthony, he had generally come out of the fray smiling and in good form.

This morning, Freddy had got up as early as eight o'clock, owing to a bad night, and was feeling rather shaky. In consequence of this, the waiter had placed within easy reach a pale lemon-colored decoction, known as a Christian cocktail, supposed by club-men to possess rare virtues as a bracer.

During the conversation above related, the young man had found occasion to visit this beverage very frequently, as it shimmered seductively on a sorrento table, in a tall glass.

"I didn't see you at Mrs. Boodleton's last night," said Captain Shrike, winking aggressively at a little milliner who tripped by on her way to work, up the avenue.

"Not much! I was afraid of being run down, so I gave up going there. It got to be a sort of 'money-or-your-life' arrangement."

"Well, you didn't miss much, I assure you. I shudder when I think of that glass of Ohio sherry I was forced to taste"—with a grimace. "Ugh! It was like swallowing a black draught."

"What a humbug Mrs. Boodleton is, to be sure," said Freddy, with his gurgling laugh. "I have run the gauntlet of the whole crew. It is really marvellous how that woman manages to get into the best set, and sport around town with her daughter as if they really had millions." When you read the elaborate accounts of their receptions in the society papers you would never imagine that they hired a boarding-house parlor from two to four one day in the week, and lived themselves in the fourth story back."

"You are a regular old woman for gossip, Freddy. I should

like to know how you manage to get hold of everybody's private history."

"I haven't got on to your record yet, old man," with a laugh, "but when I do find the key of your skeleton-closet, look out for me. I should feel it my duty to publish the whole history in the *Town Tattler*."

"No one would read it, I am sure, my dear fellow," said the captain, twisting the long ends of his moustache. "I am afraid I have led a lively, though stereotyped existence. But, speaking of Mrs. Boodleton brings up—"

"The devil?"

"No, Dora. Now Dora wouldn't be half bad, if she weren't limbed like an English hunter."

"Oh, Do' is all right in her way. If I was a marrying man, which I am not, and wanted a real ornamental head-piece for my table, I am half sure that I should go in for that young woman."

"I hear that they came near running you down at Lennox last year, and that you had a narrow escape."

"Yes, it was a close shave; I had to hunt cover, they led me such a lively chase. Pity the mother *will* throw her at everybody's head. She might have married long ago and well if it hadn't been for the old lady. I am downright sorry for that girl."

"Don't begin to pity her, or they may nail you yet."

"Oh, no, they have given me up as a bad job. The mamma now circulates the report that her daughter refused me on the ground of immorality. Nice thing to say about a fellow! No wonder I feel like striking back. I believe they are chasing up that new man, Brent, poor fellow! By the way, Shrike," wheeling around in his chair, "who is he anyway? You seem to be the only one that knows where the beggar came from. Who is he, and what is he? People keep on asking me, and I don't know what to say."

"Oh, Brent is all right," said Captain Shrike, carelessly. "The only trouble with him is that he is bothered with too much money, just like you. His father and mine used to be old chums at school, and that is the way I came to fall in with him. All his people died, so he came on East to see life.

For the old gentleman's sake I thought I would see that he was taken care of."

"And his money too, I suppose," giggled Freddy.

"Yes, if he wants me to. Good-looking chap."

"Well, rather; but not exactly in my style. Don't see why the women should rave about him so."

"Of course you don't. He has just turned up in time to put your nose out of joint, me boy. You won't be such a social martyr now that there is a rival Richmond in the field. You have ruled the matrimonial hen-roost too long."

"That's all very well; but why women fancy him I cannot imagine."

"Well," said the captain, rather rudely, "they have fancied you, so no man has a right to despair. He is going to invest his money in Eastern securities."

"Why don't you get him to take a block of my Pneumatic Railroad stock? The first dividend will be—"

"Be still; here comes Tillinghurst."

A stout little man in a sleek broadcloth suit approached them. His round face was wreathed in smiles, causing his fat cheeks to pucker up in strange pleats, almost concealing his beady little eyes.

"What were you saying about Pneumatic Railroad stock?" he asked, extending a pudgy finger to shake. "I unloaded a lot last week, and have been glad of it ever since;" and he sank into a leather-covered chair, with a sigh of relief, blinking as the sun fell across his eyes. "I am sorry you have got so much of it on hand, Freddy," he continued. "You may have luck, but it won't come out of such lamb's-bait as the P. R. R. Get out while you can."

"Get out yourself," said Freddy, ungraciously. "I dare say you have been hammering it down so as to be able to buy it up cheap. When I hear of you abusing a stock I wire my brokers to buy a big block of it."

"Come, come, gentlemen, no snarling!" said Shrike, interfering good-naturedly. "If you want to use up your strength, let us have a three-handed game of billiards before lunch."

"Not much! I wouldn't budge out of this nook for a thousand dollars," said Freddy, curling himself up in his chair preparatory to dozing off.

"And I," said the broker, "don't care to budge until I have had something to eat," looking at his watch.

"I am waiting for a friend," the captain replied; "we can have a co-operative snack if you don't mind. You must know John Brent. Big man in the West; used to own a whole county."

"Can't place him now."

"I know he told me he wanted to meet you. Has some money he wants to invest, I believe. Be gentle when you get your hands on his money. He is a friend of mine."

"That means you will want fifty per cent. out of what I make from him, eh?" asked Mr. Tillinghurst, with a knowing leer.

"What a memory you have!" Shrike replied, looking uneasily at Freddy, whose head was nodding.

"It's an expensive luxury to be a friend of yours sometimes," the broker continued, not noticing the other's frown.

"But where do you lunch to-day?"

"At Torretti's. Ever been there?"

"Don't think I have. I'm not much on lunch anyway; generally save up for dinner."

"It's a little hole in the ground on Seventeenth Street. No style at all, but he makes a salmi with white wine that is a dream and a delight. By the way, how do you like your new house?"

"Why don't you come up and see how we like it? Nice sort of friend you are, and haven't been near us in two months."

"Oh, it can't be as long as that."

"Yes it is, yes it is."

"Well, one reason, Mr. Tillinghurst, is because your daughter has no particular fondness for yours truly."

"All your imagination. She's queer, you know, but she means well. There ain't a better-hearted girl in New York."

"No signs of her getting married yet?"

"No surface indications, as they say in mining lingo. There ain't any call for her to be in a hurry as I can see. If she can't do any better than take one of them giraffes I see up at Mrs. Axminster's, why I hope she may die an old maid, that's all."

"You must miss the old house a good deal, you lived there so many years."

"I do, but I am getting used to it. You wouldn't know our parlor now at all."

"I suppose not."

"Marcia, you know, is death on having everything artistic. Consequently she has put all the wax-flowers and sea-shells that I used to like up in the garret, and given that 'Orphan Child' by Todgers away to the cook."

"I am afraid I should approve of the innovations," said the captain, with a smile.

"Well, this artistic business may be all right; I don't know much about it. But what I do know is that home ain't exactly home when I don't see around me the old things I've grown old looking at," a little pathetically. But he spoilt the effect by adding, "But you were saying something about lunch?"

"Here is Brent now," as that young man's graceful figure filled the doorway.

A luxurious life, with plenty of money and very little to trouble him, had transformed John Brent into a typical man of fashion. He had never been born to fight the battles of adversity; it would have been a shame to spoil those handsome hands by rough toil: he had been planned as a social luxury, not a necessity; and he looked at his best in a boudoir or an opera-box.

He was modestly dressed in a neat-fitting diagonal cut-away coat and gray tweed trousers, and held himself with military exactness. His blue eyes sparkled, and his entire expression was one of peace with the world and mankind in general. Captain Shrike regarded his protégé with much the same delight that Pygmalion did the charms of his creation.

"You are going to tell me I am late," said Brent pleasantly.

"Well, you are hardly on time." Then, turning to the broker, "Mr. Tillinghurst, this is John Brent, of whom you have heard me speak."

The broker extended his pudgy hand towards Brent, and lifted his eyes slowly to the young man's face. Then he sank back in his chair trembling and pale as death.

"Why, man, what ails you?" asked Shrike, unable to make

out the cause of the fear depicted on his friend's countenance.

"Oh, only one of my usual attacks," said the broker, attempting to smile. "I dare say I frightened you, Mr. Brent. It's my heart; always did trouble me from a child."

"I am sure you are entirely excusable," Brent replied; but he was just a little mystified at the scene.

"Well, let us go to lunch," broke in the captain; "you need something to brace up on, Tillinghurst."

"I am afraid you will have to excuse me, gentlemen," was the reply; "I have had such a shaking up that I don't think I could eat a mouthful. Some other day I shall be most happy," with a peep out of the corner of his eye at Brent.

"Oh, nonsense! You'll be all right in a few minutes," urged the captain.

"Not to-day," the broker answered. "But you must bring your friend up to the house to see us," he added. His voice still quavered from his recent excitement.

"I will, I will," said the captain. "Sorry you can't go with us."

Mr. Tillinghurst looked pale and ill as they said good morning, and left him huddled up in the great arm-chair, his flabby face bent on his breast, his pudgy hands hanging limp and motionless at his sides.

The Captain's quick eye took in this picture as he left the club. "I don't believe it was his heart that troubled him at all," he said to himself; "it was his conscience. These two have met before!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NABOB'S HOME.

WHEN John Tillinghamurst became first known to the world in general as a philanthropist and millionaire, he occupied a little, dirty, brown-stucco house on the corner of Tenth Street and University Place. A dingy old edifice it was, with rusty iron gratings over the French windows, and half-covered with a yellow vine that grew rank about the walls that were crumbling with decay. A peculiar round window in the roof looked like a blear eye to the passers-by in the street, and gave the building a sinister, not to say mysterious appearance. The old house, however, was dear to the broker's heart, for here, many years ago, the patient white-faced woman he had called his wife had died, and here his daughter Marcia had grown up under his care to beautiful womanhood. He had taken the old house when he was a comparatively poor man, and had hoped to die as he had lived, in the shadow of its mouldy walls; but as he grew richer every year, he became ambitious, and wanted a palace of his own, if only to be on an architectural level with his rivals.

Tillinghurst was very proud of his daughter, but he was also somewhat afraid of her. She seemed to know more about the world in general than he did, with all his years of experience. When he went out with her first in society, he allowed her to do all the talking. He knew his own shortcomings, and was a little afraid to say much or express an opinion, lest he should disgrace himself before the lovely young woman he was privileged to call his daughter. As his fortune continued to grow and multiply, and his power increased, some of this feeling of diffidence wore off. People began to make much of him, and though he saw through every scheme to win his favor, he accepted the homage as one of the perquisites of fortune, and became more confident in his conversation. As he told a snuffy old man who used to play cribbage with him

once a week, "If I can't fetch people with my brains, I can with my money; and I don't see as it makes much difference which way you take 'em."

After Marcia had graduated from a fashionable boarding-school, and had settled down with her books and music, her father had expressed a desire that she should have a companion, but had finally been persuaded that such a thing would be an unnecessary luxury. Marcia argued that she was quite able to take care of herself, and that a companion would be only in the way. To tell the truth, she was a little afraid that bringing such a commodity into the house would result in her father's second marriage, and she was not prepared to see him make a fool of himself. He was an unintellectual companion for a girl of her attainments, but he was fond of her in his rough way, and she returned the affection with fervor.

Tillinghurst had great aims for his daughter. He wanted her to become a social star, to be mentioned in all the society papers, and have her dresses talked about all over town. Her inclinations were entirely different, and they often clashed when the subject of her going out more into the world came up. She wanted to lead a quiet existence, removed from the worries and cares of fashionable life. She had a moderate opinion of her capabilities. The praise of intelligent minds she enjoyed, but for the commendation of the fools that made up the crowd she cared nothing. Belonging to the *nouveaux riches*, she was thrown very little into the company of brainy people, and consequently took more pleasure in books than in the doubtful dissipations of the reception and kettledrum. Her father could not understand this apathy; he thought it was one of the benefits of riches to be able to move on a higher plane than your less fortunate neighbors. What was the good of having money if you couldn't look down on your fellows who lagged in the race? Marcia wanted most to be let alone to find her pleasure in books, and in the old piano, with its yellow keys, that had been a friend from childhood. Her father allowed her plenty of pocket-money, and she expended it wisely on the wants of the poor people in the neighborhood. It seemed to her, in a measure, a compensation that the daughter should return some of the money her father had

wrested from the poor; for John Tillinghurst was a hard man to work for, and Shylock-like, he demanded his pound of flesh from those beneath him.

When he found himself a millionaire he began to think of building a new house. He had purchased the site of the old aqueduct between Forty-first and Forty-second streets some years before, with a view to some day building on it. He spoke of the plan one day to his daughter, and seemed elated at the prospect of leaving University Place.

Marcia had expected that, sooner or later, he would want to build further up town, where most of his business acquaintances had their homes. But it was not without some pangs that she thought of leaving the old house and its dingy little garden. She was an old-fashioned girl, and disliked changes, a feeling she doubtless inherited from her mother, who used generally to take to her bed for a week when they moved to any new place. She consented readily to her father's plans, but she could not share in his enthusiasm. It was with sincere regret in her heart that she bade good-bye to the dirty old stucco walls that she loved, and moved into the great Moorish palace which her father had reared as a monument to his success. Most of all did she regret leaving her poor pensioners behind her; but she often found opportunity to slip away to the crowded tenements, where many a poor soul looked forward to her coming. Society was at her feet, if she had wanted it. Her father was a very rich man, but he was not, as everyone supposed, the richest man in the city. In consequence of the absurd reports regarding the Tillinghurst fortune, the girl had been for a time besieged with suitors. Her father, who was mortally afraid that she would marry and leave him alone in that vast house, proved an admirable buffer in keeping objectionable young men away. In his eyes objectionable men were young men without money.

Every attack made by the fortune-hunters being repulsed, they retired in good order and left her alone. It was even rumored by the disgruntled that she had taken vows of chastity, and intended to enter a convent at twenty-five. Little cared she what they thought; her simple life was hardly changed after she came to live in the Fifth Avenue

mansion. Nor did its grandeur in the least turn her head, or stimulate a desire for much society.

Her father, try as he would to overcome the feeling, was home-sick in his palace, and longed for the old home in University Place. Many an evening he would slip away down town and take a look at the mouldy old place that had been the scene of his early joys and sorrows, and leaning on its rusty railings, would live the past over again.

The formalities he was compelled to observe as the proprietor of a Fifth Avenue mansion were irritating to a man who, all his life, had never been worried with the exigencies of polite society. The very presence of his servants (and he had an army of them) were a standing menace to his happiness. He was often tempted to kick the melancholy-looking butler, who seemed to be counting every mouthful that he took at his meals.

But the house had been one of his pet hobbies, and with his usual grit he resolved to stand by it. He felt that his self-imposed martyrdom might result in Marcia's lasting happiness; and as for himself, he could get his amusement out of daring speculations and plunges in the commercial whirlpool. He took a certain pride in his house, though he did not enjoy it. When he came home every afternoon at five o'clock, he would ramble through the various rooms, look at his figure reflected in the myriad mirrors on the walls, smooth out the Chinese silk curtains on the windows, and pass his hands over the plush on the furniture, as if he were caressing a pet cat. Poor millionaire! He tried hard to enjoy his elegant drawing-rooms, but he never left them for his little den over the kitchen without a sigh of relief.

The day Mr. Tillinghurst encountered John Brent at the Argentine Club he did not make his usual tour of inspection on returning home, but walked straight up-stairs to his study. He sat down by his desk, and for some time seemed lost and preoccupied. In the uncertain light that filled the room, his face looked worn and pale. In a few moments he started up and began to busy himself searching through the papers in his desk. As he did not seem to find what he was looking for he became excited, and scattered everything right and left that impeded his movements. Impatience, vexation, and even fear were depicted on his face, as the paper he searched for did not

turn up. "I was sure it was here," he muttered, as he emptied drawer after drawer of their contents.

Here Marcia found him at dinner time, on his knees before a huge pile of papers which he was examining with trembling fingers. He started visibly as she entered, and looked at her curiously for some moments. When she kissed him, his lips were cold as ice.

"Why, papa, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing at all," he answered, a little pettishly. "I have been trying to find a plagued receipt. If I don't find it, I may have to pay the bill over again."

"Well, at least wait until after dinner, papa," as the bell rang in the lower hall, "and then I may be able to help you find it."

"You wouldn't know it if you saw it," he said, rustling among his papers. "Well, let it go for the present," he added, closing the desk with a slam.

"Marcia," he asked, as they went down the stairs together, "did you ever hear me mention the name of Brent before?"

"I cannot remember."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

Mr. Tillinghamurst sighed, and passed one hand wearily over his forehead.

"I met a young man to-day of that name, and somehow I thought I had met him long ago."

Marcia noticed that he looked worried, but forbade herself questioning him. It was not the first time she had seen her father in a dejected mood. As he grew older the attacks grew more and more frequent, and he often spent half of the night walking up and down his room. It worried her to see him so depressed, but as he never offered her his confidence, she was too proud to ask him.

They sat down to their dinner in silence, only broken when the broker asked the butler to fill his glass. He was nervous and dispirited, and Marcia did not try to force a conversation. The sombre magnificence of the room only added to the general depression. The candelabras on the great table by which this lonely-looking couple sat, seemed to burn with bluish flames that threw strange shadows on the embossed walls.

The creaking boots of the two waiters, in their sombre clothes, echoed along the polished floors, and seemed to rouse other sounds beneath and above. The logs burning in the great fire-place gave out queer hissing sounds, with now and then a snap like the crack of a whip.

Marcia shivered, and the banker, catching sight of the melancholy butler, wished with all his heart that he was back eating tripe and onions in the back kitchen of the old house in University Place. They were both glad when the solitary meal was over, and they could get away to the parlor.

"What has been the trouble between you and Captain Shrike?" asked Mr. Tillinghurst, as he sat down by the fire-place; "I met him to-day."

"No trouble at all. Why do you ask?" she said, spreading her hands out over the flames, though the room was like a hot-house.

"Well, I kind of imagined so from the way he spoke. He hasn't been here for two months, and he used to come so often."

"Yes, papa." She did not seem to be listening to him, as her eyes peered into the flames with a far-away look.

"You don't like Shrike, now, honestly, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"And why not?" a little querulously.

"I—I don't think he is a good man," timidly.

Her father laughed. "Why, I don't know that he is any the worse for running around with the boys a little. Better sow his wild oats now, than wait until he's married, I say. They have got to come up some time, Marsh."

"Yes, papa."

"I wish you would try and like Captain Shrike."

"Yes, papa."

"He's a fine fellow—good-looking, good family, and a fortune. I know you will like him in time. Don't believe all the silly stories you get from Fanny Pixley. He has been a mighty good friend to me in days gone by, and I don't want to appear ungrateful now that I have got up in the world."

"I'll try and think better of him for your sake, papa." She looked up into his face with such an expression of love that he stooped and kissed her softly on the forehead.

"You are a good girl, Marsh," a little huskily, as he stroked

her hair. "I only wish your mother could have lived to be as proud of you as I am."

The smoke of the burning logs or his own thoughts caused him to rub his eyes with the back of his hand; for some moments they neither of them said a word.

"How are your theatricals coming on?" he asked at length. "Seems to me you have been rehearsing that piece as long as I can remember."

"Why, how can you say so? It has only been about three months."

"It ought to be good, with so much fixin'."

"Why, aren't you coming to see it? You know you have bought a proscenium box."

"Did I indeed? Well then, I suppose I must go. It's for charity, and ought to be encouraged, I reckon, though I'm not much on such shows. Don't you go and get the barn-storming fever on you, now, Marsh, like Mrs. Tilbury Trotter. They do say that when a girl gets the stage fever on her that it's more deadly than the Yellow Jack, and strikes in deeper. There's lots of girls right in your set that has had attacks of dramatic malaria. You've met lots of 'em, I dare say. They go round spouting pieces at receptions for a starter, get their ideas on dress from the lithographs in bar-room windows, talk slang, and bleach their hair lemon-color. They may be all right, but they get themselves up all wrong," said Mr. Tillinghurst, stumbling in his eloquence. "But there! I'm talking like an old fool. As if you wasn't able to take care of yourself! You've done so all your life, and I guess can for the rest of it without much of my interference. I want to like everyone you like," he added, laying his great rough palm on her dress with a caressing gesture, moving it slowly over the soft surface. "What I want most is to get you out in the world more, to enjoy this money that I get so little fun out of except in a business way. If we don't pitch some of it away it will smother us. But there!" his face clouding over suddenly, "I came near forgetting all about that paper."

"I wish I could make you forget all your troubles as easily," she said, still half detaining him as he would turn away.

"Troubles!" with a queer laugh. "Bah! I haven't got any; I buried 'em all long ago."

"But you will let me help you look for this paper?" she asked, as the old weary look passed over his face. "You have been working hard all day, while I have been reading novels. Do let me help you."

"I don't believe you could, Marsh. You—you see, this is something in cypher, and you wouldn't recognize it if you saw it, I don't believe."

"A receipt in cypher?" she asked.

"Yes," hurriedly. "Queer idea, wasn't it?"

Then, turning without another word, he went up the stairs alone, leaving her standing in the middle of the rug, with clasped hands and wondering eyes. "I wish—I wish," she said, as she went back to her seat by the fire, "he would tell me his troubles."

She picked up a book, but could not read. The sound of his footsteps died away in the direction of his study.

Before his desk Mr. Tillinghurst sat, his face bowed in his hands. The floor was strewn with papers, and some elegant books had fallen from their shelves on to the floor during the fever of the search. The millionaire was reading over for the twentieth time a little yellow-stained piece of paper that bore some faint writing in a strange female hand. His hands shook as he folded it up with a sigh and shut it up in his safe, that was set in the wall on the right-hand side of the room. He looked pale and worn, as he stood in the centre of the floor, with the strong gas-light on his face, that brought out every wrinkle with startling distinctness.

"What a fool I am to be sure!" he said, with a strange laugh; "why, I am trembling all over like a girl," as he noticed his unsteady hands. He went over to the closet and poured himself out a stiff glass of brandy, gulping it down raw. The color returned in a measure to his face. "I must be getting in my second childhood to be so frightened. That—that happened too long ago—too long ago."

He turned out the light and lumbered up-stairs to bed, forgetting to say good-night to Marcia.

CHAPTER VII.

"NUMBER 66."

CAPTAIN SHRIKE, when he introduced John Brent into the polite world of New York fashion, equipped him not only with money, but with blood. Backsheesh may be the open-sesame to the majority of the social portals of the metropolis, but there is a certain inner holy of holies where you cannot gain admittance without exhibiting your family tree or your grandmother, and Shrike knew it. The fact that Brent was supposed to have come from the West was against him from the start. The majority of New York society people believe that the West is still in a hopeless state of barbarism, rampant with red shirts and bad grammar, and sorely in need of an æsthetic missionary to labor in its midst. The captain therefore gave out that his protégé was of noble English family, and that his father had come to America to repair the fortunes of the house, dissipated by a younger brother. He even went so far as to show his intimates a photograph of a moated grange, very ivy-grown and Tudoresque, which was supposed to be Brent's ancestral home, now in the hands of another.

This pleasant fiction set people talking, and Brent soon found himself a very much sought-after young man, and in danger of being spoilt by too much adulation. To start with, he was good-looking, modest, and supposed to be rich; small wonder was it that he soon found few gates closed to him. Even the Van Bleeker Schermerhorns, who had a horror of the *nouveaux riches*, and who had been known to have an editor horse-whipped for mentioning their illustrious names in his society columns, opened their aristocratic though dirty gates. True, it was that Miss Eudora Schermerhorn was saying good-bye to her twenties, and that the family patrimony had been reduced to a beggarly pittance; but anything approaching a money marriage in the Van Bleeker Schermerhorn's ranks had not been known since the days of their illustrious ancestor, old

Wouter Van Twiller. To them, blood was everything; but, of course, if a young man had both—!

Did Brent feel the stings of conscience while he was thus being courted. If he had any attacks of remorse they did not keep him awake nights or interfere with his digestion. There were times, especially when he had nothing to do, when he felt rather ashamed of himself; but then some new pleasure would come up and crowd out all memories but those of the present.

By a beneficent arrangement, the man or woman in fashionable life has little time for introspective views. A constant succession of duties and pleasures leaves them very little alone with themselves. Philosophers are unkind enough to say that members of the elegant world are people of such meagre minds that they rush together because they dread being left alone with their own barren intellects. It might be more kind to say that society is composed of people who have something to forget or nothing to remember. At least, it is easy for the man of fashion, or woman either, to escape the pillory of their own consciences by keeping always in the rush of the current.

John Brent should not be blamed because he could look, with equanimity at least, on a life of imposition. So far, he was only having a good time on the money supplied by the Impecunious Club; the worst part of the bargain was yet to come, when he must pay for the luxuries he now enjoyed. In the meantime he was content to drift idly with the tide, enjoying all the pleasures that fortune put in his reach. Whenever he found himself in an introspective mood—and he tried never to let his conscience take the floor—he would walk down to Madison Square and take a look at the bench where he had lain on the night that Shrike took him in. It always sent him home again whistling, and quite satisfied with his condition.

Captain Shrike's operations in his name on the Street had been very successful, and a few daring plunges got his name into the papers and added to his reputation socially and in a business way. He came to be regarded as a young financier of great promise, and Mr. Tillinghamurst, who always worshipped successful people, took a great fancy to him.

"When I was his age," the broker said, in confidence, to old Van Bleeker Schermerhorn, who hated him, as he knew, with the true hate of a patrician for a parvenu—"When I was that

young man's age, I was peddling things from door to door, and living on cheese-parings. They seem to be able to make money quicker in these times than when I was a young man."

And then he would launch out in a flood of reminiscences, while Van Bleeker would resort to his smelling-salts, as if the garrulous old man's conversation even smelt of the perspiration of trade.

John Brent's meeting with Marcia Tillinghurst was under no startling circumstances, and amid very ordinary surroundings. In fact, he had dreaded meeting her, and chance had favored him for a long time; but Shrike, who had an eye for business, arranged that they should meet at the ball given by the Amsterdam Club at Delmonico's.

"I don't want to give you a chance to fall in love with anyone else," he said, with a meaning smile, as he handed him the ticket.

Somehow, it took Brent a very long time to get ready that evening; and twice he came near cutting himself with the razor, his hand trembled so.

Had he been asked he would have had difficulty in explaining his emotions at that time, but he certainly felt strangely unnerved, or, as Captain Shrike would say in club parlance, "rocky."

He drove down to the ball, forgetting that he had promised to call for Freddy Pixley on the way. He felt a desire to ask the driver to return, but he did not dare to thwart Shrike. He tried to argue with himself that it was childish to be afraid of a woman whom he had never met. If he had been going to meet her as an honest man he would have felt differently; for the mournful eyes he had seen in the square that night still haunted him. He lit a cigarette to soothe his nerves; he knew he must put on a bold front for the encounter.

There was only one light in the Tillinghurst mansion as he rolled by it. He imagined as he lay there on the soft cushions that he could see Marcia standing before her mirror preparing for the ball. "Poor girl!" he said to himself, as the picture rose before his view; "you little know the conspiracy that is on foot to dispose of you."

The sight of the millionaire's palace looming up in the night brought other pleasant fancies to a man of his strong imagina-

tion. He could see a carpet of scarlet velvet reaching from the grand entrance to the curb-stone, where a carriage waited with impatient horses. And down the soft scarlet expanse came tripping a lithe, graceful young woman, in a smart travelling suit, leaning on the arm of a noble-looking young man, while behind the couple rose a fashionable group of people who harried them with rice and old slippers. And there stood Papa Tillinghurst at the door of the carriage, with tears in his eyes, and a check for a handsome sum in his hand, which he pressed upon the reluctant bridegroom, and—and—

But the carriage rolled up to Delmonico's, and his dreams were broken by the profanity of the coachmen who blocked up the street. There were about two hundred people present when Brent entered the ball-room. The Amsterdam Club prided themselves on giving only the most select entertainments, and there was always an overhauling of family histories and the *Americana-Heraldica* when the tickets were given out.

Fanny Pixley had taken up her stand in the centre of the room, and was enjoying the homage of half-a-dozen lanky young men with piping voices, who chattered like apes. Her face, which was as delicately colored as a *sèvres* ornament, would have delighted Watteau, and inspired a poem in Beaudelaire. An overweening confidence in the effect of her own charms, however, robbed her features of half their beauty. Her face was generally revolving like a pin-wheel in her efforts to distribute her smiles and melting glances over a large expanse of high-collared young men. Admirers she had by the score; they were ticketed off in her ivory address-book under different headings—those who took her to lunch, and those who might be depended on for the opera and theatre. Fragile and delicate-looking, she went through the season in a mad gallop without any respite. She never wanted to rest. A quiet life would have probably worn her out much sooner than the noisy excitement in which she moved. The crash of music, the chatter of the dinner-table, the mysteries of the toilet, all acted as a tonic on this social cyclone.

Her dresses were miracles, and yet they had never been through the custom-house. An Irish modiste, with a French name, made her toilets; but who this incomparable dress

maker was, not even her most intimate friends could tell. Her dress to-night was of exceptional elegance. A skirt of heliotrope silk, covered with festoons of valenciennes lace, was surmounted by a boddice of saffron moiré, with large buttons of sèvres ware, while a jabot of rare old lace fell in a cascade from throat to waist. The costume would have been trying to anyone but a girl of her shell-like complexion and dainty coloring.

"Now, don't begin by saying something complimentary about my dress," she said, as Brent approached. "Do you know, I have heard nothing else all the evening. Just as if I had made it, and only wore it, like a dressmaker, for an advertisement!" with a pout.

"I wasn't going to say a word about your toilet, I assure you. Now you mention the fact, however, I can't help saying that it is rather pretty. I was going to speak to you about the theatricals on Wednesday."

"You were there?"

"Yes, I led the clacque. Your death-scene was intensely realistic; in fact, horrible."

"I should think so," said Fanny, with a shudder. "You know, the property-man made a mistake, and put a bottle of red ink on the table instead of a vial of poison."

"And you took it."

"I had to; every one was looking at me. I ought to have been realistic, for I went through all the agonies of death while disposing of that ink."

They chattered on for some moments, until a waltz began, and her partner came to claim her. Brent had been to Brooklyn that day, and was in no mood to dance. He strolled over to the corner where he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Wilton. She was talking to General Horatio Seaton, a little man with gray imperials and a ruddy complexion. He had never forgiven the North its share in the war, and was a perfect gatling-gun of military reminiscences.

Mrs. Wilton, in a marvellous costume of pomegranate satin, covered with black lace, looked like anything but the occupant of a Broadway garret. The brilliant Parisian diamonds sparkled brightly at her white throat; they were a present

from the Duke Alexis, she said, and no one dared dispute the assertion.

"Ah was just sayin' to the general," she remarked, with a strong Southern accent, "that ah wundahed why sasahty people, who have so much time on their hands, never exercise any ingenuity in gettin' up entertainments. Yeh's New York, supposed to be the greatest city in the country, and the social programme consists of a ball one day, a musicale the next, and a dinnah-pahty the next, an' so on with few variations."

"And would you like to revive the social amusements of the middle ages?" asked Brent. "Under such conditions, General, you military men would get the best of us poor civilians, I am afraid. Imagine, if you can, a couple of those slender youths who are hovering about Fanny Pixley, in a tourney, running full tilt at each other, trying to break each other's heads."

"It would at least be a manly pastime," said the general, sniffing the air as if he detected the smell of the supper, "and it would keep up a warlike spirit that is dying out except in the South."

"No, ah don't know about the tourneys," said Mrs. Wilton, "for then all the matrimonial prizes would be won by brawn and not brains. But we are at the other extreme. There's nothing romantic about sasahty nowadays."

"I am afraid you will search in vain for poetry in New York life. For my part I don't hunger for the romantic; I have had enough pastoral pleasure in my boyhood to last me all my life."

"Oh, I dare say I should tire of paradise itself, for that matter," yawning behind her fan.

"I confess that New York has still some charms for me," said Brent. "So far I have not had a chance to tire of its many seductions. How about you, General?"

"Oh, I am not hard to suit; a soldier is easy to satisfy. Enough to eat, enough to drink—that is all."

"He is engaged just now on a work on the Civil Wah," put in Mrs. Wilton—"a very remarkable book, too, from the glance I had at the manuscript."

The little general bowed his head very meekly. "At least I shall tell the true story of Bull's Run," he murmured.

Brent groaned inwardly, but said nothing.

"There goes Mrs. Prentice Follansbee," remarked Mrs. Wilton, as a lady in pearl-colored satin swept by in the waltz with a whir of starched draperies. "Ah don't see how she gains admittance in a place like this. They know well enough she will turn round and describe the whole of it in detail in some horrid society paper she writes for. Ah understand she is about to publish a book on New Yoke high life, giving everybody fits."

"Novel-writing seems to be quite an epidemic in society now. There's Mrs. Fawnley, the tobacco-dealer's wife, who blooms in print every two or three years, not to mention Frank Castor, with his historic drivell."

The orchestra struck up a waltz, and Brent was soon floating around the room with the fair widow in his arms; while the general, who did not dance, and did not want anyone else to, whom he was with, looked on and scowled.

"What do you want to waltz with that woman for?" asked Captain Shrike, who met Brent a few minutes afterwards, flushed and heated. "She will never do you a bit of good, and has a devil of a tongue."

"We are probably drawn together by the ties of companionship, I imagine," said Brent, with a grimace, as he wiped his heated face. "We are both of us frauds, and ought therefore to be chummy."

Shrike smiled grimly. "Well, you've got lots of company here to-night," as his eyes roamed around the room. "We needn't blush with the best of 'em. Look at the Van Bleeker Schermerhorns. Never tired of talking about their descent and old Wouter Van Twiller. Always bragging about their blood, and at the same time satisfied to live on the charity of their relations, because they believe trade is degrading. There is a whole family of frauds for you. Then we have Mrs. Kendrick Hewson and her daughter. Look at the diamonds! There are enough to fill a pint measure. Their place on Madison Avenue near Thirty-fourth Street is a perfect treasure-house. The dress Miss Hewson is wearing cost a cool thousand, if it cost a penny. Where do all the dollars come from? Hewson gets a salary of five thousand a year, and spends ten on himself. Who is the family banker? That tall, lazy-looking man in the doorway, twisting his blonde moustache, could

answer if he wanted to. He gave the mission fund a thousand this year, and was talked about in all the papers. He is the skeleton in the Hewson closet—a skeleton with a material pocket-book. Here we have old Jeff Thompson, of the Concentrated Insurance Company; lovely-looking old man, is he not? Note his mild blue eyes and snowy hair, and the benignant smile that plays about his pink face. He is principally celebrated for being in love with his wife. Society cannot understand how two old people who are married can be fond of each other, so they regard this couple with awe and attention. I have no doubt he does love his wife, but unfortunately, he is unable to concentrate his affections in any one place, and—but I'll tell you the story some day of this genial old minotaur,' stopping short in the midst of his eloquence. "Ah, my boy, take courage! In figurative language, you are a good egg among a lot of bad ones. Sail in without any conjunctions; be a humbug among humbugs, and they will all have a better opinion of you."

The babble of many voices reached them as they stood there. The swishing of starched skirts and the shuffling of many feet were like the droning of innumerable bees. The perfume from the banks of roses that filled the four corners of the room, and from the superb flowers that were worn by the dancers, rose in the air like incense that was almost stifling. The two men moved over to the only open window, eager for a breath of fresh air. Bits of conversation were borne to them as the kaleidoscopic crowd shifted to and fro, and the voluptuous music rose and fell. Some of the scraps of chatter caused them to smile.

"Is that Jen Atherson?"

"Yes. She has had her dresses cut an inch lower in the neck this year. I suppose that's for the colonel's benefit. Look at the salt-cellars! Anybody would know she was forty by her neck."

"Your friend Annie seems to be starring it to-night, in that violet satin and point lace."

"Rather a nice dress to hire from a Fourth-Avenue costumer."

"How did you come to know she got it there?"

"I—I was there looking for some private theatrical costumes."

"Oh!"

Two club men. "Frankie Caldecott looks younger than ever to-night. Gad! she used to be an old flame of the governor's."

"She'll ring you in next, old chap, if you don't look out. She's warranted never to fade, and fast colors. What do you suppose she is up to now?"

"Going on the stage?"

"No, she is writing her autobiography."

"Impossible! Why, it would be suppressed."

Brent was amusing himself listening to the scraps of conversation, when Captain Shrike touched him on the arm. "Look!" he said, nodding in the direction of the doorway. "Behold, your fate awaits you!"

Mr. Tillinghurst had just entered the ball-room with his daughter. Brent hardly dared to look at her at first; he felt ashamed of his position. She only glanced carelessly about the room, but he was sure she was looking indignantly at him. He was aware of mumbling some commonplace remarks as Shrike introduced him, and then they were left alone together in one corner, while the captain discreetly retired to where he could watch his charge.

At the first sound of her voice Brent felt reassured, and some of his old confidence returned to him. It soothed him like a pleasant melody, a forgotten song that is recalled. He felt that she was studying him from head to foot, and weighing him well. He was embarrassed in the presence of this gentle, soft-eyed girl, who was so different from the chattering magpies he had been accustomed to meet in the polite world.

Her costume was in keeping with her modest appearance and calm repose. It was a blue-black velvet, made severely plain, and piped at the edges and seams with white satin; her only jewels were a string of pear-shaped pearls that clasped tightly her white throat. The excitement of the occasion had brought a delicate flush to her otherwise pale cheek, and her sorrowful-looking eyes sparkled with shifting lights.

Brent, as his confidence became reassured, could not take his glance away from her face.

"You don't go out into society much, Miss Tillinghurst?" he said, after an awkward silence.

"Not as much as papa would have me," was the reply. "I am afraid he has begun to regard me as a very incomprehensible person. I am more unsophisticated in regard to social matters than blasé. It simply doesn't interest me to go to receptions and parties."

"For my part," said Brent, "I need an atmosphere of society in order to be happy. I need the friction of crowds. While I see more in the swim to condemn than to praise, the study of these shams is none the less interesting. My position in the social world is one of genial pessimism. Why, I have picked up any number of scraps regarding human nature here to-night that have amused me vastly."

"I am afraid, Mr. Brent, that you are a dangerous character, if you go about taking these mental photographs. It doesn't do to go to the root of these social questions. You must be a little near-sighted when you go around the ring. The use of a microscope will not strengthen your faith in your fellow-men, or in women either."

"I confess I have a prying mind," said Brent, with a smile. "Until the past few months I have seen very little of the world, or of society either, and I am still intoxicated with its pleasures. I suppose the fever attacks every man sometime in his life, like composing verses or the measles."

"I don't believe your case is hopeless," returned Miss Tillinghurst; "but I trust you will not become a social hedgehog, as I am now regarded," with a laugh.

It seemed strange, but he found nothing to say to her.

"Would you like to waltz down to the other end of the room?" he asked, as the music started in one of Waldteufel's dreamy melodies. "I think Fanny Pixley is motioning to you."

The waves of the waltz caught them up and bore them out into the silken, billowy sea, islanded with black. The lights quivered with the rushing feet, and the air was drowsy with the perfume that hung like a mist over the wavering heads. Brent was conscious of nothing tangible but the soft form in his arms, and the loosened lock of hair that burst from its fillet and swept his cheek.

The delight of that dance lasted but a moment. He caught sight of Captain Shrike's grinning face in the crowd. The enchanted sea was once more a crowd of painted women and perspiring men.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE GAME'S AFOOT."

"HERE's an account of the racket last night, if you care to read it," said Captain Shrike, tossing a newspaper across the table where they dawdled over a late breakfast. "I see they have you in as large as life, and next to Miss Tillinghurst too."

"I never read the society columns on principle," returned Brent, "unless it is in an English paper. In this country the department seems to be generally given over to imbecile paragraphers, and is about on an intellectual par with the advertisements."

"At the same time we cannot afford to despise them," was the response. "There is nothing like the newspaper to make a thing go, from a medicine sham to a social sham. We can abuse journalists as much as we please in private, but it is sad but true that they have it in their power to make or mar a man; and it's a good deal worse for a woman. Look at your friend Mrs. Boodleton! She is diplomatic enough to be forever asking Jim Walker of the *Telephone* to dinner. Personally she does not care a cent for him; yet witness the results. Suppose we say that having him to dinner costs three dollars, which it don't. Well, after being primed to a proper pitch with her wines and stuff, he goes off and writes about half a column describing the magnificent receptions they give (in the boarding-house parlor), and dilates upon the family diamonds and Dora Boodleton's jewels. Why, me boy, it is a splendid advertisement; splendid! You must keep in with the society reporters, if you want to succeed in society. They are the Midas-power of the press; tread lightly on their corns. A few strokes of the pen, and they have transformed a dingy flat into a palace, a shabby back-parlor into a stately drawing-room, a cabbage-garden into a conservatory, a sandwich-

lunch into a collation worthy of Lucullus. Therefore I say, Heaven bless 'em!"

Brent did not seem to be listening; he was eyeing the tablecloth in his peculiar moody fashion.

"Do you notice how much space is devoted to describing Mrs. Wilton's costume?" asked Shrike, who had resumed his paper. "You can remember yourself that it was nothing remarkable at all, yet here I find it described down to the minutest trifle, even to the beads on her slippers. Clever woman! I can see by this that somebody's palm has been crossed. Now, she will buy five hundred copies of the paper, and ship them around to her friends, especially marked. Result, she will be asked to spend a few weeks at some one's country-house next summer, and once within the walls she is good for the entire season. I must begin to work the press in your interest, me boy."

Brent's only answer was to go over to the window, where he stood for some moments looking out on the street. "I wish," he said finally, "that you would not be forever reminding me of my position."

"Oh, indeed!" was the mocking reply; "you don't like to be worried in this affair at all. I have all the trouble of engineering it through, while you sport around, and then get in a bad humor if I remind you of your obligations. Sometimes I feel like throwing up the whole affair."

"I have no doubt you find me very poor material for your purpose," was Brent's reply. "Have patience with me, and I dare say I shall become in time a villain after your own heart," bitterly.

"Come, come, that's no way to talk; be a man."

"There's the rub," was the ungracious reply; "I can't be a man and do as I am doing."

"You had better trundle some of your convictions down to the docks and dump them overboard; they are too heavy for you to carry under the circumstances."

"I wish I could."

"You don't want to go back to your old life again. Why, man, you fancy this girl already. I read it in your eyes last night. If you give up the fight, you must give up her too."

Brent started. "Let us not talk of her," he said, huskily.

"As you say, I could not go back to the old life again—never! It is too late to turn back." He poured himself out a glass of brandy at the side-board and gulped it down greedily. "You have had my promise, and I will stick by it. Sink or swim, we will stand together in this matter."

"Well said, me boy, and in after-years you will thank your uncle for putting you up to such a good thing. Everything is working beautifully," rubbing his hands together slowly; "everything points to success."

"I will tell you one thing, Shrike," Brent said, after some moment's silence; "I am getting tired of doing nothing. It gives me too much time to think. I used to lead a busy life before I met you,"—his face flushing slightly at the recollection,—"and I'm tired of being an idler. Get me something to do. I'm naturally lazy, but if I had regular hours I should be much happier, I am sure."

"It ought to be easy enough to find a berth for a man in your position," said the captain, meditatively. "If a rumor got around that you had lost all your money it would be different. Thanks to me, you have considerable reputation as a financier. How would you fancy a broker's?"

"I'm afraid I should ruin the concern in a week. I should much rather get into some business where I should have no chance of tangling things up so that the firm could never unsnarl themselves."

"You want, in short, what is known in vulgar parlance as a soft snap. Short hours, little work, and much importance. For you, such a position should be easy to find. You brace your friends, and I will mine, and between us both it will be strange if you don't find a safe and lucrative lodgment."

"The sooner the better," was Brent's reply. "Fashionable loafing seems to be about as dull as the more vulgar variety. Where are you going this morning?"

"I have to meet a friend at the Grand Central at eleven," looking at his watch, "but I shall lunch at Torretti's about two. If you happen to be around the neighborhood, drop in. And by the way, I was going to forget something of importance. I want you to invest \$10,000 with John Tillinghurst."

"What, I?"

"Yes, you; it will inspire confidence, and I have my reasons,"

"But there is only about \$200 in the bank to my account."

"There will be much more; in fact, all you need. The cashier, you will recollect, is a member of the club."

"And what if this money is lost? You know I am a perfect child about money matters."

"Have no concern on that score; it will not be lost. The old fox will return you a large percentage in order to inspire you with confidence to get you to invest more. It is like most other forms of gambling; you will be allowed to win heavily at first, that you may be secured more easily in the end."

"But the labor market is in such a troubled condition that no man's money is safe."

"Oh, that will all blow over; don't be alarmed. Working-men tire of strikes as soon as they find out how unprofitable they are to all concerned."

"I confess my sympathies are with the poor devils, though at present I am a member of the bloated aristocracy," said Brent.

"Socialistic, eh?" with a laugh. "I am afraid you are too stylish and too fond of dress to pose as a labor reformer," as they parted at the door.

Shrike watched him get into the carriage, and then turned away, shaking his head. "There's some noble clay in that vessel," he remarked to himself; "pity it has so many leaks." And swinging his cane jauntily, he set off down-town, his face a picture of content.

John Tillinghurst occupied the most modest set of offices to be found in the great building he owned on the corner of Broadway and Canal Street. There was not a superfluous bit of furniture, even in the private office of the millionaire himself; everything looked ponderous and uncomfortable. On the only visit Marcia had ever made to the building, she had suggested putting in some pictures and bric-a-brac, but he stoutly resented any attempts at innovation.

"I want all my help to know when they come here, that it ain't a ladies' parlor where they can dawdle away their time. These rooms are cleared for action; we don't go in for style."

Tillinghurst called himself a broker, but he took a hand in most anything that promised a large return, from lending money on furniture to buying out a business. In addition to dealing in general stocks he was the owner of the Empire

Flour Mills at 113th Street and the Goshen Sugar Refinery at Hunter's Point, besides being a silent partner in a number of other lesser concerns. His clerks were very different from the generality of brokers' clerks. They dressed simply, and looked like English butlers, moving about their work silently, with never a smile or a joke. Most of them had been with Mr. Tillinghurst a long while, and had consequently absorbed his manners and brusque way of talking. They did not love him as a task-master, for he always exacted one hundred cents on the dollar; but the pay was always sure, and he never forgot those who served him well.

Brent, obedient to the orders of his "matrimonial manager," as Captain Shrike was pleased facetiously to call himself, found Mr. Tillinghurst engaged when he sent in his card that morning.

He was assigned a seat in the little waiting-room that was separated from the money-spinner's den by a glass partition. A more uninviting place to wait in could not be well imagined. There was a hard, shiny little hair-sofa in one corner, a great yellow earthenware cuspadore on the floor, a glazed map of New York on the walls, and the advertisement of an Accident Insurance Company. This last proved to be the most interesting thing in that doleful room. It presented a series of graphic illustrations of ladies and gentlemen, in green and red costumes, being blown to pieces and run over and chopped up in the most approved style.

Brent was studying this work of art when the sound of angry voices reached him from the direction of the private office, so loud that he could not help hearing some things said. It was evident that Mr. Tillinghurst was receiving a delegation of working-men, for he heard the broker say, in an irritated voice: "I don't see how I can afford to come down to an eight-hour schedule without cutting the pay down too, and I suppose that wouldn't suit you at all?"

There was a negative growl, and a shuffle of heavy boots.

"An' is that all ye have to say to the delygation?" asked a hoarse voice.

"All, for the present," Mr Tillinghurst replied. "I know better than you do what my stuff brings in the market, and I

am paying all I can, unless I want to run the business for fun."

The door clicked, as if the men were about to leave; Brent caught sight of several tousled heads and some muddy-looking boots.

"If we take that message back to the men," said the owner of two of the boots, "as I am a livin' man they'll all go out on a strike; they will indeed, sir."

"Well, let 'em strike and be damned." Then, catching sight of John Brent at that moment, his face underwent a complete change of expression. "Come in," he called out cheerily, his face in a broad smile.

Brent pushed by the three sullen, disappointed-looking men going out. They seemed so downcast at the result of their mission that he felt sorry for them. He would have liked to say a word to them, but the sharp voice of the millionaire recalled him to himself and to the business before him.

"Well," said Mr. Tillingham, as he grasped the extended hand and shook it warmly, "I am downright glad to see you, though it isn't such an age since we met. I dare say you heard some of the things I said to those men who just went out. They come from my sugar refinery at Hunter's Point, and a precious sulky lot they are to deal with. Making a fuss again about their wages. Want to work eight hours a day and get the same pay. They know, the rascals, that it is the busy season, and that we have more orders ahead now than we can fill without running over-time."

"And what are you going to do about the matter?" asked Brent, seating himself at the broker's elbow.

"What am I going to do? Why, not give in an inch: that's what I am going to do. The more they get, the more they want. I'm not going to get left in the lurch right now; if they strike, let 'em. I'll close the mill and go out of the business. It's been tried in Massachusetts and worked first-rate. I don't believe in these labor unions, and never did. I got along all right, when I was a young man, without walking delegates and master-workman humbugs; and what did then ought to do now." He was talking excitedly, with his face flushed and his eyes sparkling.

"There ought to be some way of disposing of your case

without resorting to extreme measures," Brent ventured. "Some day I am going to buy a factory and try some of my schemes on the working-men. There must be a way of dealing with the labor problem besides using force."

"You wouldn't think so if you had been through all the experience I have had with 'em," drawing his lips tightly together. "I've tried every way under the sun, and have come to the solemn conclusion that the only way to get along with the working-man is to keep him down. However, you didn't come all the way down here to get my opinion on the labor question, that's certain. How did you like the ball last night? My daughter mentioned meeting you."

"Yes, I had that pleasure."

"Queer girl, ain't she? That is, everybody says so when they first meet her. Did you notice that dress she had on?"

"I noticed that it became her," the young man replied, a little mystified at the question.

"Well, it wasn't a patch to the one I had ordered for her to wear to the affair. When she came home and saw it, she said it was—what is the French for too low-cut in the neck? Anyway, she wouldn't wear it, and put on some old thing she'd worn a dozen times. Spunky little thing, she is," wagging his head back and forth. "Never did I see any one like her."

"You ought to be rather glad than sorry for that," said Brent.

"I am, I am; but then that girl is up in the clouds so much that it ain't often she gets near enough to earth for me to enjoy talking to her. Sometimes I wish she wasn't quite so knowing, more on the style of Fanny Pixley, for instance. There's a girl for you! Why, I suppose there ain't much going on in society but what she knows of."

"I have always thought," put in Brent, mildly, "that there was a good deal going on in society that it was best a girl should not know."

"True, true!" said the other, wagging his head. "I don't go out much myself in the giddy throng, but whenever I do I am pretty sure to trip over something queer before I've got very far. But let us get down to business; I'd ramble on all day if Marcia was the subject."

Brent wanted to say he could do the same thing, but he

remarked, "I came to see you to-day to get you to help me out of a predicament."

"Not financial, I hope," said the broker, pursing up his lips as if he wanted to smile, but somehow was ashamed to. "Well, out with it, and if it's in a business way, here you are!"

"It is business, and I think in your line. In short, I have been living so modestly for the past three months that I have accumulated over and above my income a little over ten thousand dollars that I don't know what to do with."

The other stopped drumming with his fat fingers on the table, and looked at Brent with amazement and admiration on his face. "Ten thousand dollars, eh? Well now, that ain't half bad for a man of your age;" and he resumed his drumming, as if he were trying to count on his fingers just how much the entire income must be.

"Yes, ten thousand dollars," said Brent; "and I want to get rid of it badly."

"Why don't you put it in my hands?"

"I was about to suggest that—but such a small sum, Mr. Tillinghurst—it would hardly be worth your trouble."

"Oh, for a friend, you know, is a different thing," the millionaire replied, with a gracious wave of his hand; "for a friend, anything!"

"I may add," said Brent, "that I may be able to place in your hands a like amount every three months, if I continue to live in the same modest way that I have been doing; that is, until—"

"Until you get married, eh?" asked the other, with a boisterous laugh. "Ah, then, my boy, you will find your wife can help you get rid of the surplus without any trouble at all."

Brent felt that his face was flushing; he did not know exactly why.

"Look out, my boy," rattled on the broker. "The crowd are after you, and a mighty hungry pack they are, too. Don't be cornered. I should hate to see such a fine fellow as you captured by some scheming hussy."

Something in the tone nettled Brent.

"There is no occasion to be alarmed as yet, Mr. Tillinghurst," he added quickly.

"Of course not, of course not; but it's just as well to be prepared for what might happen. That's the check, eh?" as Brent handed him a slim strip of paper. "Well, I'll see that it works hard for you and brings in some returns. I'll guarantee you at least seven per cent., but in these troubled times a man never knows where he is coming out."

"We won't quarrel about the interest," said Brent; "I know you will do the best you can for me. But I was going to say—"

A sharp rap on the door caused him to pause in his sentence.

"Don't move," said Tillinghamurst; "it's only my confidential clerk," as a gray head was stuck in the doorway. "Come in, Mr. Hawkins."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Tillinghamurst, but I thought you were alone," the old man quavered, as he looked at Brent doubtfully, blinking like an owl in the sunlight.

"Well, if you've got anything to say, out with it," was the reply. "Don't stand on ceremony because Mr. Brent is here. He is, I may say, one of our stockholders, and therefore entitled to know a few of the secrets of the firm," and he grinned in a reassuring way.

"Well, it's just this, sir," said the old clerk, not quite satisfied whether he ought to speak out or not; "I've just been telephoned for by the Empire Mills."

"Well, well, well; what's the trouble up there?"

"Heaps of trouble. The men are all dissatisfied and talk of another strike, particularly the old hands. The detective you put on duty reports that Superintendent Jim Connors is secretly encouraging them in their demand for higher wages."

"That's the way, that's the way," roared Mr. Tillinghamurst, as he walked nervously up and down the office, clinching his fists; "that's the way with those fellows. I might have known that hang-dog-looking Connors would turn on me sooner or later. That's what I get for doing the Rev. Mr. Satine a favor. He said it would be a noble act to give that poor devil a lift, because he had a big family. Well, he'll get a lift now. I'll lift him out, that's what I'll do;" and the broker shut his teeth together closely, in that peculiar way which his enemies knew always meant mischief.

"Hawkins," he called, peremptorily, stopping short in the

middle of the floor, his face still wearing its disagreeable expression.

"Yes, sir."

"Make out Connors' discharge, and bring it to me to sign at once, do you hear?"

"But, sir," trembled the other, "if you discharge him, half of the men will follow, and here we are, right in the midst of the busy season. As it is, we have to work over-time to fill all our orders. I'd wait a bit, sir."

"Well, I won't, and that's flat. Do you suppose," stamping his feet, "that I am going to let that Irishman walk over me just to save a few dollars? Go at once and make out that discharge-paper, and don't have so much to say another time; I have too many advisers now for my own good."

The clerk disappeared in the direction of the counting-room without another word.

"This is a nice state of affairs," gasped Mr. Tillinghurst, sinking into a chair, and addressing no one in particular. "If I could only get my hand on the man that invented trades unions I'd make it hot for him, that's all;" and from the expression on his face it was safe to infer that he meant it. "Nice fix I'm in, taking things all around. The Goshen Refinery all ready for a strike, and now this fuss up at the Empire Mills. It's just like Jim Connors to walk right out of the place as soon as he gets my letter, and leave me without a superintendent, or a blessed soul to look after my interests; just like the ungrateful cuss. I suppose I'll have to leave my business and go up there and tend to things myself.

"No need of that," said Brent, touching him gently on the arm; "I'll go myself."

If a torpedo had exploded under the worthy millionaire's chair, he could not have started with more surprise than he did.

"You?" he asked, in a tone of amazement.

"Yes, why not? I worked several years in a Western flour-mill, and know the business thoroughly. Now, don't laugh," as the broker's face puckered up in ominous creases; "there must be some fatality in your losing a superintendent just at this time."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Only that I was going to ask you, before I went away, if you knew where I could get something to do."

"Why, I always thought you were an elegant man of leisure, who rather looked down on poor working-folks like us."

"Quite the contrary. I am tired of loafing, even if the loafing-ground is draped with satin and carpeted with Axminster. I thought I should never tire of idleness, because I worked so hard as a boy; but I am getting restless, and want something to occupy my mind."

"Let me shake hands on that," said the broker, extending a great fat hand, which Brent shook gravely; "I thought you had more in you than those lanky fellers I meet out and around, who couldn't make three dollars a week if they had to earn it themselves. I like to see a man work, and hard too; let the women-folks do the dawdlin' about; it won't do for able-bodied men like you and me. I thought you were joking at first, but now I know you are serious, why, I'll do all I can for you."

"All I ask is, that you will try me for a few weeks up at the mills; and if I don't get along with the men, a hint will easily get rid of me."

"But your social obligations, what of them?" asked Mr. Tillinghurst. "Won't it be rather hard at first to give up all the pink suppers and kettledrums and afternoon what-do-you-call-'ems?" with a suspicion of a grin on his face.

"I am quite sure I can get along with a smaller quantity of social hilarity. It's only when a man is idle that he takes pleasure in such entertainments."

"Well! I am in such a corner that I don't know where to turn. I don't know as you could mix things up any worse if you wanted to. So I don't mind if you do try your hand at the mills. Any man that's at all smart ought to get along up there. The foremen all know the business thoroughly, and all you will have to do is to examine their daily reports and keep your weather eye open. If you get in a snarl or don't know what to do, just consult Jenkins; he's only the book-keeper of the mills, but he knows the whole business from top to bottom. Connors never was much more than a figure-head anyway, and if you and I hold consultations once in a while,

I guess the Empire Mills won't go under quite yet awhile. You are quite certain you are in earnest?"

"Quite," said Brent, and there was no doubt that he had made up his mind fully.

"And you will begin?"

"To-morrow, if you like."

"Good! Come up to my house to-night, and we'll talk the matter over. I can post you about your duties in a half-hour. I don't believe you will have any trouble if you begin by putting your foot down. Don't begin by being kind, that's all, for they will only jump on you the first chance they get."

"I shall try to do right, I hope," said the young man evasively, as he said good-bye and left the office.

Mr. Tillinghurst watched the young man from the window as he got into his carriage and was whirled up-town, then he sat down by his desk and gave vent to a low and prolonged whistle.

"Well, there's a queer character for you! Ten thousand dollars surplus out of his quarter's income, and anxious to work eight hours a day. Never made any mention of salary either. I won't be the first to suggest it. Hum! he's not much of a business man; but he's plucky. Blame it all, he's plucky," shaking his head back and forth.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD MAN BOWKER.

"I HOPE Joe ain't goin' to mix hisself up in none of this trouble. Porter's folks is downright starvin' ever sence he went out of the shop this day three weeks."

The speaker was a slender young woman, with a pale face and watery blue eyes, who wore a smart little bonnet and a gay blue-and-white shawl. She was seated in a wicker rocking-chair, by the window, looking out at the dirty children playing about the fountain in Bolger's Court.

"I thought I'd drop in to see if there was any news from up above," she added, addressing an elderly woman bending over a wash-tub in one corner of the room. "You ain't heerd nothin', have you, Mrs. Skerritt?"

"No, I ain't, Malvina," stopping to wring a flaming red garment. "But there's a good bit o' talk up there among the men, and I shouldn't wonder if Joe took a hand in it. He's kind of fond of speakin' out his idees, is Joe. I used to be proud of it, but in these times it's likely to git him into trouble."

"He can speak as much as he has a mind to, so long as he don't go into no strikes," said the girl. "What would become of the money he saved up to buy our furniture with, if they was ordered out? It would go like—like melted butter."

"Oh, I got faith in Joe," said the elderly woman, again bending over her tub with a sigh. "I know he won't do nothin' rash. He's just like the Walkers, and they was always a cautious crowd."

"Yes, but if the Brotherhood orders him out, he's got to go," said the young woman, rocking backwards and forwards in her chair furiously; "and then the money 'll go too."

"Why don't the Brotherhood pay 'em so much a week when they are out on strike?" asked Mrs. Skerritt.

"Well, they pretends to; but, bless yer soul, there is so many

strikes nowadays that there ain't nigh enough money to go round. Jim Quigley drew three dollars last Saturday from the 'sociation, but what's that for a sick wife and three children, and the rent five a month."

"Well, there ain't no use of thinkin' about it till the time comes," said Mrs. Skerritt, with a sigh. "We've weathered some pretty hard times since George was took away, and I guess we kin get along in some kind o' shape if there is a strike."

"Well, I hope so," said Malvina, taking some knitting from her pocket and beginning to work.

"What I don't like is him goin' so much to the meetin's up in Sixth Street. It don't do him no good to hear them Rooshians and Dutchmen making speeches and talkin' agin' the laws and what they'd do if they only had their way and could blow the capitalists into kingdom come. I wish you'd say somethin' to him, Malvina. It ain't no good for me."

"I will that," said the girl, "I met him one night comin' home with the fellow they call Heckelmann, a Dutchman that lives in Walker's alley, and was arrested for beatin' his wife. He's one of them agitators, and has got a regular prison face on him, though Joe says he's mighty smart for a furriner. But how's your rheumaticks, Mrs. Skerritt?" with a rapid change of the subject.

"Well, it ain't so bad, Malvina," straightening herself up. "There ain't nothing so good for sech things as turpentine and peppermint. I wouldn't have it so bad if I could keep these two rooms clean and dry. I never see sich wet walls in all my life, and I keep a fire goin' most o' the time."

"Have you seen them new sanitary flats on East Broadway?" asked Malvina. "I hear they was built for poor folks, and is clean and well ventilated. They looks real handsome from the outside, and the rent ain't so dear, neither."

The old woman shook her head. "You could never get Joe to move into such a place, Malvina. He wouldn't put up with the rules and regulations. When my old man was alive, we tried one of them flats in Jersey City. It was a beautiful place—just as clean and dry; and the rooms, if they was small, had nice big windows and high ceilings. I could ha' stood it well enough, but father wouldn't mind the rules, so we left and came here."

"Why, was the rules hard?"

"No, they wasn't so hard when you come to think 'em over, but it galled the men to be treated like children. For one thing, everybody had to be indoors by ten o'clock. No beer or anything stronger was allowed in the place. Rooms had to be swept on Tuesdays and Fridays, and there was a woman who went all over the house on these days to see that it was done."

"Well, that couldn't have been a hard rule for you to follow, Mrs. Skerritt," said the girl, looking at the spotless floor and the polished array of platters and dishes on the dresser.

"I know that, but it made me mad to have somebody watchin' over me all the time to see that I kep' everything clean—just as if I didn't know enough to do it alone."

"I suppose they got up the laws for them as didn't," said Malvina. "I know it'd be a mighty good thing if they'd make old Bowker on the floor below clean up his place a bit. I never see so much dirt in my life. It's about a foot deep over everything."

"What a man he is, to be sure! I fix up a bit for him now and then, but bless me, I don't have time to look after my own work, let alone anybody else's. That reminds me that he's laid up with a fever just now. I must drop in an' see him before dinner-time."

"It ain't any catchin' fever, is it?" asked Malvina, with some hesitation.

"No, just a tech of agy, that's all. He's been workin' purty hard—that is, for an old man. Diggin' trenches for water pipes somewhere up town. Kerosene and raw eggs is the thing for him. Mercy!" stopping to wring a piece of clothing, "how that old fellow has changed since he first come here with his wife. He was kind o' spruce-lookin'; and she was a lady if I ever see one. They took the first floor parlor when they came, but as things went from bad to worse, they kept moving into meaner rooms higher up in the building. She caught her death while movin' into that very room where he's a lyin' now on his back, poor man. It changed him fearful. It's a pity he didn't die along o' her, instead o' hangin' on miserable, drinking hisself into the grave." Mrs. Skerritt paused to wipe the suds out of her eyes. "What a sight o' misery these old walls has

seen!" she remarked, half to herself, as she dried her hands on her apron, and set the tub away under the closet shelves.

"Look," said Malvina, suddenly starting up and pointing into the court-yard; "ain't that the daughter of Joe's boss comin' in?"

"That's so, it is," said Mrs. Skerritt, peeping out; "and she's sure to drop in here, and all the clothes from the wash layin' round everywhere. Here, Malvina, help me tidy things up a bit. I wouldn't have the young lady see the room in this shape for anything."

They bustled about so effectively that they soon restored things to their places, and were still dusting the chairs when a knock sounded at the door.

Marcia had brought Fanny Pixley with her, that young lady having expressed a desire, some time ago, to view the field of her friend's labors. She was drawn more by curiosity than by sympathy, for she was the kind of girl who abhorred poverty in all its shapes. True it was, that, every Sunday afternoon, she taught a group of youngsters the elements of religion in the basement of the church of the Heavenly Hope, where Mr. Satine held forth; but she endured the task only because it was fashionable in her set, and a duty that she could not well omit. Marcia had urged her to wear an unassuming attire on this trip among the city's poor, and she had reluctantly given up the opportunity of donning a new costume, which had just come home from the modiste's, and attired herself in a black velvet gown, trimmed with jet, and a Rembrandt hat with dark blue ostrich plumes. Marcia, who was dressed in a neat alpaca, without an inch of trimming on it, frowned at Fanny Pixley's rather theatrical get-up, but she said nothing.

The young ladies were warmly welcomed by Mrs. Skerritt, who put tidies on her best chairs for her guests, and seemed overwhelmed with the importance of the call.

"This is Joe's young woman," she said, introducing Malvina, who seemed to have suddenly lost her power of speech, and could only regard Fanny Pixley's costume in mute wonder. "She and Joe is to be married in the spring."

It was now Malvina's opportunity to blush, a performance which Miss Pixley regarded with some interest, not to say wonder.

"I have been hearing some very good news about your son," said Marcia, pleasantly.

"And is that so, Miss? Well, now, I'm downright glad to hear you say it," beamed Mrs. Skerritt.

"My father's superintendent, Mr. Brent—"

"Yes, Mr. Brent; I've heard Joe speak of him."

"He says Joe is one of the best workmen in the mill, and may be made foreman before the winter's over."

"Well, now, Joe'll be downright glad to hear that. Malvina," to the girl, who was still studying the Rembrandt hat and its waving plumes, "did you hear that, Malvina, what the lady says about Joe?" But the girl was too absorbed in taking an inventory of Fanny's costume to pay much attention, even though it concerned her lover.

"And how is your good father, Miss?" asked Mrs. Skerritt. She hated the millionaire cordially, but wanted to seem polite to her fair guest.

"Very well, thank you," said Marcia. "I am going to get him to speak to Mr. Bolger about these damp walls. I am sure half of the sickness in the building comes from them. It ought to be different."

"And it's very kind of you, Miss, to be wastin' your thoughts on us poor folks," Mrs. Skerritt broke in gratefully. "And would you mind statin' at the same time that the gas leaks in the basement that bad that I'm always dreamin' I've fallen into a sewer; and there's the McGintys on the fourth back, who are always emptyin' things out the window. It was only yesterday that I had me head out talkin' to the milkman, when they empties out a load of ashes that tuck me in the neck and most knocked me into the court; and they'd ought to put up a railin' around the fountain, for them childers is always droppin' through into the basin, and—and—" But she was too exhausted to go on, and sat down and mopped her face for some moments with the corner of her apron.

"It won't do to ask for too much at once, Mrs. Skerritt," said Marcia. "The reforms must be brought about by degrees. You leave it all to me, and I have no doubt that, in time, Bolger's Court will be equal to any tenement in the neighborhood."

She had made up her mind some time ago that the court

was a good field for her to try some of her pet projects. A model tenement house it should be, she resolved, if money could accomplish such an end.

"And now, how are all my charges since I was here last?" asked Marcia, looking at her watch. "I have very little time to spend here to-day, so I thought I'd come to you first and get all the news. Tell me what has happened, and what is needed, and who needs it."

Malvina, having managed to get a corner of Fanny Pixley's dress in her fingers, was examining it curiously, and too deeply interested to hear anything of the conversation.

"Well," began Mrs. Skerritt, counting on her fingers, "that gal on the top floor as was starvin' last week has got work. It's only shirts at eight cents a piece, but then it buys her vittles, if she works eighteen hours a day. Then there's the twins in the third back. Well, they're just eatin' their heads off. I tell you what you might do, Miss, if you feels like it."

"What's that?"

"Mr. Watkins as sells papers at Fulton Market has broken his leg."

Fanny Pixley shuddered at the sound of this unfamiliar word, but took care not to express her disgust aloud.

"I will send him a doctor at once," said Marcia. "Not serious, I hope?"

"Oh, no, Miss, it was only a wooden one; but he can't go on with his business until he gets a new one."

"He shall have the best the market affords," Marcia laughed, "with all modern improvements. Well, what next?"

"Well," said Mrs. Skerritt, thoughtfully, "perhaps you wouldn't mind lookin' in on old man Bowker."

"Bowker—Bowker?—I don't think I have ever seen him."

"Perhaps not, Miss. He's kind of gone up here, they say," tapping her forehead with a long, red finger; "though I always found him a harmless sort o' chap."

"What is the trouble?"

"He's dreadful sick with some kind of fever."

"Oh!" shrieked Fanny Pixley, looking towards the door as if she was tempted to bolt.

"It ain't nothin' catchin', Miss," continued Mrs. Skerritt, a

little scornfully, addressing that young lady. "It's not me that has been a mother eight times as would let ye go to the poor creature if it was dangerous. He's just breakin' down, is old man Bowker. You can a'most see through him, and when he coughs it's like a watchman's rattle. He's had some sad story, I know by his face. He goes shufflin' about the court like a ghost, and scarin' women folks half to death—as miserable a lookin' man as ever drew breath. You may have noticed him sunning himself out in the yard some day."

"I think I met him once on the stairs. He glared at me, and then passed on."

"Oh, he's very harmless, Miss. Only a bit daft on account of troubles."

"And he is sick and in want? I'll go and see him now," rising. "Here," to Mrs. Skerritt, taking a bill out of her pocket-book and handing it; "that will restore Mr. Watkins' missing member. Come, Fanny."

"But, surely, Marcia, you won't go into a room where there is a fever," protested that young lady, adjusting her bonnet by the small looking-glass nailed on the wall. "Think of the risk."

"Oh it's nothing that ye can catch, ladies," interposed Mrs. Skerritt. "I've seen the poor old man this blessed day, and it's nothin' more nor less than a touch of fever and agy, that's all. Malvina 'll go and show you the way, won't you?" turning to the young person.

"That I will," promptly replied Joe's *fiancée*, eager not to lose sight of the wonderful velvet dress; "and it's help the poor old chap needs, bad enough," as she led the way out of the room, well pleased to be the guide of two such elegant young ladies.

"I'm sure this will be the death of me, Marcia," Fanny murmured, as they bade hospitable Mrs. Skerritt good-bye and crossed the hallway.

"But you needn't come in unless you want to, Fanny."

"Oh, I can't leave you," was the response. "Something terrible might happen to you, and then I should never forgive myself, never," almost in a whimper.

Marcia smiled in spite of herself at the thought of Fanny in the rôle of protector in time of danger, but said nothing, as

they threaded their way through the dim-lit hallway, filled with noisome odors.

Fanny Pixley's high-heeled French shoes tinkled strangely on the rough, uneven planks of the floor, as she felt her way along, smelling-bottle in hand, wishing in her heart that she had gone to the Gillespies' reception, instead of wasting the afternoon in a tenement-house.

"I'll go in first," said Malvina, pausing in front of a door at the end of the gallery. "Then I'll let you know if you can come in." She left them standing in the hall, and disappeared.

"Oh, how can you run such risks?" piped Fanny Pixley. "What a girl you are, Marcia!"

"It is not too late for you to turn back," said Marcia, as Malvina beckoned them in.

Fanny said no more, but timidly followed her friend on tip-toe through the door.

The room in which the girls found themselves was small and damp, and lit only by a dirty skylight, through which the sunshine fell dimly, as if loath to enter such a dismal hole. Some broken bits of bread and a rusty coffee-pot stood on the only chair in the room, and the fire-place was empty and cold-looking. Marcia shuddered in spite of herself.

Old man Bowker lay on a straw mattress in one corner of the room. His lips were moving to and fro as he murmured incoherent words to himself, apparently unconscious that he had visitors. His thin, pinched features were flushed, an unnatural red, and the veins in his forehead stood out like knotted cords. His bony hands moved about the many-colored patchwork quilt as if he were writing something, and his watery-blue eyes rolled helplessly in their sockets.

Malvina left the girls in the half-darkness and approached the bed.

"Mr. Bowker, Mr. Bowker," she called, gently. "There's two young ladies that have come to see you."

He looked at her vacantly, as if he had not understood exactly what she said. Then his eyes, wandering about the room, saw the two girls standing motionless in the corner. "To see me?" he asked, incredulously.

"Yes, to see you."

He laughed—a strange laugh that filled the old room with

peculiar echoes. Fanny Pixley could hardly repress a tiny scream, and clung even closer to her friend. Marcia came forward.

"I was visiting Bolger's Court," she said softly, "and Malvina here," laying her hand on the girl's shoulder, "told me you were ill, so I came to see if I could not do something for you."

"But what do you get out of it?" he asked suspiciously.

"What do I get?—the satisfaction of doing good. You are in trouble, sick; I want to help you."

"And without any hope of reward?"

"Without any hope of reward."

He looked at her curiously, and laughed again. "The world must be growing better," he said, wagging his head back and forwards, and staring at her with dull, lack-lustre eyes. "Yes, it must be growing better."

"I hope so."

"There's lots o' chance for improvement, ain't there?"

"You have suffered a good deal," she said soothingly. "Believe me, there is still much good in the world."

"There may be, but it don't come my way. I guess it's mostly confined to Fifth Avenue and Murray Hill," chuckling to himself. "You look as if you came from that neighborhood," he added, touching her dress with a long, bony finger, and staring at Fanny Pixley, who retired behind her friend. "That looks like real velvet, and I believe it is. We don't see much of such things in this end of the town."

"You have lived here a long while, Mr. Bowker?" Marcia said, trying to change his rambling talk.

"About a month, that's all; before that I used to live up by the Hill, too."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and it's so. Is the fight still going on there?" he asked earnestly.

"The fight?" she said puzzled; "what fight?"

"Why, the fight that is never finished. It's a good while since I've been in the world, but I suppose things are pretty much the same. The fight for fame and fortune and money—does that still go on? I was once in the thick of it, but they downed me. I fell down, and the wheels went over me; ground

me to powder. We've had lots of that sort of cripples in Bolger's Court—wrecks thrown on these dirty sands like so much drift-wood, only fit to—to burn. Yes, they'll burn," with a chuckle; "no doubt they'll burn," breaking into a fit of laughter.

"I hope you will soon get over this attack, Mr. Bowker," Marcia ventured. This horrible old man frightened her, with his claw-like hands and livid face.

"Yes, yes," rolling his eyes. "But I don't mind being delirious. I forget where I am and who I am; then I go back about ten years or more, and live my life all over again, and I whistle and sing. Why, it's just as good as being a boy once more;" he broke into a fit of coughing that shook him like a leaf.

As he shivered a good deal, Marcia bade Malvina make up a fire in the hearth, and the blazing logs soon restored a comfortable temperature to the damp air of the room.

"Would you say I was crazy?" asked old man Bowker, suddenly pausing in the midst of a song he was humming to himself in quavering tones, and looking at her earnestly.

"What makes you think so?" she asked.

"Every one tells me so around here. The children run away from me. I've begun to think so myself. I'd like to kill some of them, that's all," with savage emphasis.

"Hush, you mustn't say that," laying her finger on her lips. "You are ill; you don't know what might happen to you. Suppose you were to die to-night."

"Oh, no, I won't," he said, confidently. "I'm not going to die—that is, not just yet."

"How do you know? Your fate is in another's hands."

It was plain he was getting more delirious.

"I shan't die, I tell you; no, not till I've squared accounts. I was a book-keeper once, ye see, and I like to see accounts kept straight. The debit and credit ain't balanced yet," making figures in the air with a long, bony finger; "when they are, why, I'll die without a whimper; but not till then—not till then."

The words rolled hoarsely in his throat; he rubbed his worn hands together and sighed. She rose to go.

"Don't leave me," he pleaded, turning his white face, with

its beseeching eyes, towards her. "You are the sweetest thing I've seen in all these long years, since—since—I was a man;" and a tear trickled down his wasted cheek as he held out his hands pleadingly; "don't go just yet."

"I must," she said.

"But you will come again?"

"Yes, some day, when I hope to find you much better."

She slipped a couple of silver dollars down on the chair when he was not looking. His hand was still extended, and she could not refuse to take it as she bade him good-bye. He pressed hers feebly, but seemed loath to let her go.

"Come, I'll show you the way down, Miss Tillinghurst," said Malvina, opening the door.

The words had scarcely left the girl's lips when Marcia felt the grasp on her hand suddenly tighten, until she could hardly repress a scream of pain. The sight of the old man's changed face alarmed her. His thin lips worked convulsively, and the pale-blue eyes rolled helplessly in their sockets, while he strove in vain to speak. He seemed to be trying to get up.

"Oh, he's took dreadful bad, Miss," cried Malvina, as Marcia tore herself away from his grasp. "Let us go before he gets any worse."

"Yes—yes, go!" he cried hoarsely, shaking his nerveless hands at them, while his long fingers seemed to writhe like snakes. "Go away—as far as you can." Then, catching sight of the money on the chair, he took it up and hurled it at Marcia with a curse that made her shudder.

Malvina, who alone had kept her presence of mind, pushed the frightened girls through the door, and closed it after them hastily. They could hear his voice growling out curses as they sped along the corridor, with blanched faces and beating hearts.

Fanny Pixley had much to say at the dinner that night. She was glad of the adventure for the reason that it gave her something to talk about. As for Marcia, she looked troubled for many days after. The livid face of the old man was ever before her, his curses still rang in her ears, waking or sleeping his memory haunted her.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE EMPIRE MILLS.

"THERE's some hungry fellows hangin' around Wilkins' shoe-factory to-day, I guess. This is the fourth week since they struck, and my old woman says they're playing to hard luck, some of 'em."

The speaker was one of a crowd of working-men seated on a lumber-pile in front of the Empire Mills. It was twelve o'clock, and most of them had lunch-cans open, from which they brought forth as many curious-looking things in the way of eatables as are produced from a conjuror's marvellous hat. There was the sound of champing teeth and the gurgle of flowing coffee and tea in the air.

"Wilkins' ain't the only shoe-shop closed," said a man with a beard almost up to his eyes, who spoke with difficulty, having just put a tea-biscuit into his mouth. "The city shop closed yesterday, and there ain't no knowin' when they're goin' to open agen. It's my opinion, from all I hear, that the Union'll shut 'em all up. That'll bring the capitalists down on their marrows;" and he took a copious draught of cold coffee, and sighed. "That'll make 'em whistle kind 'o small, eh, Skerritt?" to the young man.

"Perhaps the strikers'll whistle small too, Jim," said a young man in a clean blue jumper and brown overalls, who sat on the top of the board-pile, a bright-faced fellow with sandy hair and pale-blue eyes. "If you've ever been in a strike, you'll know it ain't much fun. For my part, I don't see much use of 'em anyway. Seems to me the working-men always gets the worst of it."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" said the man with the beard. "Well, mebbe they does, and mebbe they doesn't. Anyway, it makes these here moneyed chaps learn that there's power in the poor. It reminds them of the power of the people—that

we has laws they are bound for to respect," falling to on a pickle, well satisfied with his eloquence.

"You vos right, Shim," said a greasy-looking man at his elbow, with a double chin and black, vicious-looking eyes, who was eating a sausage in wild animal fashion. "Off dey would stir tings oup here mit a shtrike, I dink it would do us all goot. It would bring dot tam gapitalist mit his senses so quick vot nefer vos."

"Oh, your're a foreigner, Julius," said the young man in the jumper. "You don't understand them things at all. We don't want no Nihilism or whatever you call it introduced in this here country. The Brotherhood of Labor 'll do all for us that we wants, and by square means."

"Oh, is dot so?" sneered the apostle of fire and blood. "You like dose laws, I expose, vot your rich mens make for himself, eh? You like everytings closed auf Sunday, dose galleries unt museums, on de only day vot verkingmens can get about? You like to get shtamped auf your neck by the iron heels off a decrayted civilization?" with an impassioned gesture.

"Come off, Dutchy," irreverently shouted some of the younger men in the group.

"Come off, you say?" asked the German angrily. "A nice set of fellows you vos. Afraid mit your own skins for fear you get bounced by de boss for sayin' vot you tinks. Look at dose fellers down-town. Vot you tink of dem, eh? Vot you tink of dem? Dey don't get fair wages, unt out dey valks auf der shops, to show dere employers dot dey don't care a tamn by dem. Vell, pooty soon, dose employers dey find dey make no monish until dey get down unt crawl unt beg dose beautiful verking-men off dey wouldn't come back. Oh, it vos nice ven you make a gapitalist do shust vot you vant. Vot I say is, if you don't like de laws, vy, do away vid 'em."

"We may have to fall in line with the rest of the strikers, Dutch," said Joe Skeritt. "I ain't heard what they're goin' to do about Connors bein' discharged."

"That was a shame," said the man with the beard. "They fired Jim Connors for no reason at all, and put this here dude Brent in his place, who looks as if he never done a day's work in his life, I hear he's one o' the stockholders of the mills, and

that's the reason he's got the job. The idee o' puttin' a regular swell for a boss over us fellows. It's a downright insult, that's what it is, gotten up by old Mother Tillinghurst. I suppose Brent don't get no salary, so they keep him."

"Off I had my vay," said the socialist, "I would take dot boss out some fine evening und put him under dot pump. My, vot fun!"

"Well, if you was to try anything like that, Dutch, you would stand mighty liable to get your head punched," said Joe Skerritt, cutting off a block of cheese from the hunk in his hand, and stowing it away in his mouth. "Brent ain't none the worse for it if he does take a notion to dress well and wear clean linen, as I can see. We ain't never had no fairer superintendent since I been here, and I, for one, am going to stand by him." His remarks were received with approval by the crowd. "I tell you what, boys, made me take such a fancy to this swell. I found out it was him that had the pay raised twenty per cent for all over-time work. I'd like to know if that ain't the fair thing in the man?"

"He's got a great pull down yonder," said the man with the beard, pointing his thumb over his shoulder. "And money! well, I hear he has pretty near as much as old money-bags."

"Dot's all right," said Heckelmann. "He got dose pay raised pecause he had to do sometings ven he first came in de mills dot would make him solid vid the men. He vas a shly dog, and don't you forget it. He vill make dot money up out of our shkins some tay, now you shust vait and see."

"That's just like you, Julius," said Joe Skerritt. "If you can't croak about somethin' to-day, you growl about somethin' that's goin' to happen to-morrow. You're a regular old kicker; s'pose you dry up?"

"Vell, vell, I don't vant to quarrel mit you, Joe; but you vos all wrong, as you vill find out some tay;" shutting his dinner-pail with a savage click. "I used to get took in by dese aristocrats, but I don't any more. Oh, I know too much."

"You do, do you?" said Joe, in banter. "But there's the bell, boys; time's up," as the bell in the tower of the mill rang out sharply.

There was a sudden closing of lunch-cans, putting on of

coats, a few yawns, and then the crowd shuffled into the door of the factory, and separated to their various tasks.

John Brent had found the position of superintendent of the Empire Mills anything but a sinecure. But he was a much happier man since he had taken the position and seemed to get on fairly well with the men.

Captain Shrike was very much pleased with the new turn of affairs. In the move his protégé had taken alone and of his own accord, he saw more promise for the future success of his plans.

Brent found that his position gave him frequent opportunities to call at Mr. Tillinghurst's house in the evening, to talk over plans for operating the mills. It was natural that he should meet Marcia very often, and not infrequently she joined in the conversation, for Mr. Tillinghurst, who believed her to be one of the most intelligent women in the world, was always glad to get her views, even on business.

Brent had been at first a little shy in the presence of this cold, stately young woman, whose eyes seemed to read his character at a glance. He was a little bit afraid of her until the ice had been fairly broken between them, and his visits to the house on Fifth Avenue became more constant.

Soon he began to look forward to these calls with pleasure, and he made every excuse to prolong them when he arrived. To tell the truth, father and daughter were both glad to see him, for neither liked the bustle and hurry of society, and much preferred the placid pleasures of home-life, and an evening spent with a congenial friend.

So Brent became a welcome guest at the millionaire's house, and though he very seldom saw Marcia except in her father's presence, a bond of friendship was established between them, and they began to understand each other thoroughly.

Mr. Tillinghurst, if he noticed at all the danger in which he had placed his daughter in allowing a young man to visit the house so often, at least kept his own counsel and said nothing. When, by slow degrees, Brent became more interested in Marcia, he felt a burdening sense of the shame of his position. It stung him to think that he had ever bargained with Captain Shrike to win her. He was glad that he had so much work on hand which would prevent him from thinking

too much of the unmanly part he had to play in that social comedy.

To men in business-life there was plenty to think of and worry about. The troubled condition of the labor market bothered the millionaire a great deal. The number of strikers in and around the city was increasing daily, and already he had been compelled to close the Goshen Refinery at Hunter's Point. It was only a question of time, he felt, before the Empire Mills would follow; and he was therefore making haste to dispose of his stocks, in order that he might be ready for the crisis which was sure to come.

In business circles the all-absorbing topic of the day was the labor agitation. The commercial world trembled at every rumor of a social revolution. The danger of a panic on Wall Street was imminent.

John Tillinghurst went about among his friends and in the business world with a genial smile on his face, and laughed down their fears of impending danger. Other capitalists of the city were equally anxious that the public confidence should be restored, and banded themselves together to resist the encroachments of the strikers, whom they resolved to starve into submission.

By spending millions they succeeded in settling many troubles in the labor camp, and for a while it looked as if the stream of commerce was again to flow placidly on its way. Tillinghurst, who had been studying the matter, knew better. It was the rumble of the earthquake beneath his feet that he heard. The red hand of Socialism was lifted against the city, waving a torch of fire.

Mr. Tillinghurst spent several hours in the week now, consulting with John Brent at the Empire Mills. The older man was for being firm in resisting the workingmen's demands, while the younger urged moderation. It was therefore natural that they frequently clashed, but Brent generally got what he wanted, for Marcia, who often took part in their deliberations at home, always threw her influence in the balance in favor of the employés.

One day, Mr. Tillinghurst came, in great excitement, into the superintendent's office, where Brent was seated writing.

"What do you think?" he gasped, sinking into a chair, his

face purple with rage, as he waved a newspaper wildly to and fro over his head. "Those damned strikers have burnt my mill down at Hunter's Point."

"But it was insured?" asked Brent.

"Not a cent. The insurance ran out yesterday, and I was about to renew it to-day. The devils! they must have got wind of how things stood, and just laid for me;" and Mr. Tillinghurst groaned and stamped his feet with impotent rage.

"And will you rebuild?"

"Never, never! I'll never put up a brick. There's two hundred thousand dollars gone, if there is a cent, not counting what I lost on the strike. Did you ever know of such confounded fools as these men are? They were well enough satisfied with their wages, but wanted me to discharge a foreman who had served me well for ten years, and I naturally refused to do it. So they struck. Ah, I know what you are going to say," as Brent was about to speak. "You are going to tell me that I can afford to lose that factory. Well, I suppose I shan't go broke if every building I own is burnt to the ground; but to have these confounded hounds that I have fed and clothed all these years destroying my property, why—why, it makes me tearing mad, that's all;" and he walked up and down the room, fuming, and mopping his face with his huge silk handkerchief. "How's everything going on here?" he said, pausing in front of Brent's desk.

"No sign of trouble yet, that I can see."

"The men seem to take to you kindly enough. I was kind of afraid they might kick when I removed one of their kind and put you in." He had calmed down, and was talking as if nothing had happened to ruffle his temper.

"Oh, yes, we get on very well together," said Brent. "I try to treat them well, and I think they rather like me. We have a foreign element here, however, that try to stir up mischief. I've had to reprove several of them for expressing their socialistic views in working-hours."

"You want to weed all such chaps out. They are at the bottom of the trouble, depend on it. If it hadn't been for a confounded Russian, with a smooth tongue, who went about the gin-mills lecturing to my men, why, the Goshen Refinery would be standing now," with regret. "I don't see the use of

these Unions anyway. I got along very well without 'em, and I don't see why anybody else shouldn't. It's all bosh that they do any good. The 'Brotherhood of Labor' is a humbug."

"Would you like to take a look through the mills?" asked Brent, reaching for his coat.

"Yes; I think it stirs 'em up to think that I'm still on the look-out."

They left the office and crossed the courtyard, entering the main room of the mill, where the machines were sending up clouds of white dust in showers that settled on everything, like snow. The men, covered by this, looked like pallid spectres, as they moved to and fro about their work, with slippered feet that made no sound as they walked.

"There's no better flour than that in the country," said Mr. Tillinghurst, stopping to scoop up some from a half-filled barrel by one of the machines, allowing it to filter slowly through his fingers. Then, turning to Brent, he said, in a low voice, "What a tough-looking foreigner that is, feeding that machine," as the scowling face of the German socialist was seen above the feeder. "Who is he, anyway?"

"That's Heckelmann. He's a good workman, but I have had some trouble with him. You see, he lets his tongue get the best of his brain sometimes."

"Well, don't keep anybody on a minute if you think they are going to stir up a fuss. The time has come for decisive action. If you show these fellows that you are afraid of them, why, they will walk all over you. Fire out the malcontents, and the others will go on all right. I tell you what I think you had better do, Brent. Get a placard announcing that, in case of a strike, no one will be taken back to work in the mills. It might stave off the trouble if any of 'em were thinking about such a thing."

"I rather think it would hasten the catastrophe," said Brent, quietly.

"Ah, well, perhaps you know best; but if I hadn't used so much moderation in the past towards my men, why, I'd be a good bit better off to-day. But who's that chap over there with the sandy hair? He looks like a bright one."

"He is one of the best in the mills. That's Joe Skerritt."

"Hum! nice, honest face; but you can't trust any of 'em," as he walked on to the door again. "I don't see," added Mr. Tillinghurst, as he paused on the threshold, "but that things are going very smooth here. You know the south end of the city is a good bit stirred up, and half the industries are at a standstill. Perhaps we may escape the trouble altogether."

"Well, I hope so," said Brent, heartily, "both on your account and the men's."

"There you go again with your sympathy for the men," with a smile. "I half believe you're a socialist yourself," poking at him playfully with a pudgy finger.

"Well, if I am, I shall not strike," said Brent.

"By the way, you didn't get around last night. Marsh expected you, too. Come around early and take dinner; I expect Shrike will be there, that's all. My cook has got up a surprise dish which he promises to be something remarkable; but I don't want to get your hopes up. You'll come, though?"

"With pleasure, but I may be a little late."

"Oh, well, we'll give you until seven. But," pausing, while his face suddenly became grave and changed, "you told me you used to work in a flour-mill at St. Louis."

"Yes, that was about five years ago."

"I used to know a family of your name living in Detroit, and I was trying to establish a relationship."

"I have no relations living," said Brent, his face a little flushed at the peculiar questions. "What the devil is he driving at?" he said, under his breath, watching Mr. Tillinghurst curiously.

"I was travelling through Illinois in 1879," said the broker; "had a horse and carriage, and was taking things easy. Beautiful scenery in the northern part of the State."

"Yes, yes; so I've been told."

"Perhaps the most beautiful town I came across was a little place called Carter's Ford," eyeing Brent out of the corner of his eye, who started visibly. "But I must be getting downtown," as he shook hands and walked across the courtyard, with his eyes thoughtfully bent on the ground.

"Can he suspect who I am?" was the question John Tillinghurst was asking himself in his heart, "or is this merely a coincidence?" He sighed as he stepped into the carriage, and

bade the driver hurry home. He was not altogether satisfied with the result of his visit.

In his arm-chair in the superintendent's office, John Brent watched the departure. "I wonder why he mentioned Carter's Ford?" he asked himself. "Was it a warning that he knows that I am sailing under false colors? Is Shrike playing a double game?" he sighed, as he thought of Marcia.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN SHRIKE BECOMES CONFIDENTIAL.

"CAPTAIN SHRIKE, you know everyone; tell me who that very distinguished-looking man is, speaking to Marcia Tillinghurst. Bless me! but he looks as if he were going to eat her. Who is he?"

"That," said the captain, slowly adjusting his eyeglass; "why, my dear Mrs. Meacham, that is John Brent."

"Well," said the lady, adjusting a lemon-colored curl over a wrinkle on her forehead, "well, I never heard of him before."

"And you pretend to be a society woman," sighed the captain, compassionately. "Why, that young man has been the subject of more discussion than any one since Pugthorpe ran away with his cook. My dear madam, have you been wintering in Morristown?"

Mrs. Meacham laughed shrilly.

"They seem to be very much interested in each other," said she, looking across the expanse of glistening bald heads and yellow curls in front of them, to the couple in the corner; "a spring wedding will follow, eh?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Shrike, a little savagely. "How could you imagine such a thing? She has money, beauty, accomplishments; while he——"

"Well?"

"Oh, I don't know anything against the young man," the captain hastened to say. "You see, I introduced him into the best society here, got him into the clubs, you know, and gave him the fling of the town—of course I must stand by him. But he's not the same fellow he was once. Had too much adulation of late; it has spoilt him," and the captain cast a stealthy glance over at the object of the conversation.

"Not dissipated, I hope?" said Mrs. Meacham, shrugging her white shoulders.

"Well, you know what young men are. Go out, you know,

with the boys, and—well, if they are at all weak, why they run down-hill pretty fast.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Meacham, and then drifted into another subject. “By the way, there is Mrs. Wixon; have you read her new novel on Russian life? It’s perfectly delightful, called ‘the Countess’—‘the Countess’—oh, its some horribly long Russian name that I can’t remember just now. The hero is a serf who falls in love with the countess, and she with him, and then the count, he kills them both, and they die in each other’s arms in the most delightful way. Why, Captain, you ought to read it.”

“Yes, from your description I know I should like it,” said the captain dryly.

The rooms were beginning to fill up. Mrs. Smithsonia Wixon only gave four receptions during the year, and, in theatrical parlance, she “always drew a crowd.” You met all sorts of people in her drawing-rooms. The social strata became inextricably mixed. Murray Hill jostled West Fourteenth Street, and nearly everyone present was celebrated or notorious for something literary, artistic, or scientific. Most of the men had long hair and short names, and most of the women short hair and long names.

The babel of voices blended into a hoarse roar. Everyone seemed talking at once, and talking fast. Scraps of conversation welled up from the surging sea of silks and laces and broadcloth.

Mrs. Wixon stood at the head of the room, by the door, and spoke to everyone by a wrong name as each new arrival came in. At her side stood Mrs. Wellington Brasher, the distinguished Western poetess, dressed in a sea-green silk, trimmed with worsted lace, looped up with sea-shells in the form of buckles. She affected short curls, talked with a lisp, and generally carried in her bosom the manuscript of a poem, which she was willing to recite on the smallest provocation.

Mrs. Brasher was a fine business woman, and appreciated the power of the press. If she knew there were many newspaper-men around, she was sure to commit some eccentricity, in order to get her name in the papers. She never lost a chance to get a free advertisement, even if it came to endorsing a patent soap or face-powder.

On the night in question she had succeeded in gaining the ears of two reporters, who had promised to write articles about her visit to the morgue the day before; so she was radiant. She had cultivated a smile which had won her many friends, and she was using it to advantage. It was a sort of confidential smile, that took especially well with the men. It seemed to say, "You are the one I have been waiting to see; I am happy knowing you are here."

Shrike, who had been studying the crowd for some time, particularly John Brent and his companion, turned again to Mrs. Meacham.

"By the way," he asked, with his peculiar drawl, "who is that fat man over there, with his hair in his eyes like a Scotch terrier, and the *décolleté* collar?"

"That," said the little lady, adjusting her glasses to her eyes, "is Watkins Mudge, the distinguished artist, who made money by going off and dying."

"Dying!" echoed the captain. "Why, you alarm me. How can a man make money by going and dying? Insurance?"

"Oh, of course I don't mean that the man really died and was buried. Dear, no! He was very unsuccessful, starving, in fact, and lived in a little tumble-down house near High Bridge, furnished with nothing but the pictures he had painted and couldn't sell. He had a wife and no end of children. General misery all around. He made up his mind one night that he would commit suicide. Jumped into the East River, but found the water too cold, and swam ashore. He was ashamed to go home and be laughed at, so he spent a week in a Brooklyn boarding-house. When he did get back, he found that the news of his death had brought hundreds to see his house, and that his wife, like a prudent woman, had disposed of every picture he had stored away, at a high figure. He is all the fashion now, and rolls in his own carriage."

"Dear me!" said the captain, tugging at his whiskers; "I wonder why half the people here to-night are not tempted to try the same experiment."

"Oh, they have," said Mrs. Meacham. "A good many have tried it since, but it won't work. But here comes Mr. Tillinghurst heading towards us; let me escape him while I can;" and the little woman wriggled dexterously through the wall

of dowagers in front of them, just as the portly form of the broker was seen tossing in a sea of silk, very red in the face and puffing like a tug-boat, until a friendly tide floated him up to the wall where Captain Shrike stood.

Mr. Tillinghurst could not speak for several moments, but stood panting and mopping his great forehead with a scarlet handkerchief that almost matched his face in tint. His rotund form was encased in a tight-fitting dress suit of such shiny broadcloth that the broker looked as if he had been freshly oiled from head to foot for the occasion. On his ample shirt-bosom a diamond as large as a hickory nut sent forth sparks of fire.

"Hello, Shrike," he said, familiarly, still rubbing his great fat cheeks and puffing hoarsely; "did you ever see such a gang as this? I'm not much on literary people anyway, but Marcia would bring me here. I was for going to Dixon's to-night. You know Jim Dixon? Splendid fellow! Head of the white-goods department at Pilkins & Co."

"The what department?" asked the captain, coldly.

"The white goods, muslins, etc."

"Oh, you mean he is in trade?" with a little scorn.

"Yes, and devilish good trade, I should say. Ten thousand a year and an interest in the business."

"You wouldn't think that was much, now, Tillinghurst, would you?" asked the captain cautiously.

"Well, no," with a laugh, "I don't suppose I would; but I remember when I was worth only \$500, and I was never happier in all my life. People say I've added four naughts to that figure since," chuckling, "and I guess they ain't very far off."

"Your daughter will be quite an heiress."

"Well, I don't believe she'll have to come on her relations if I die to-morrow. It's a peck of money to leave to a little mite of a girl like that, just turned twenty."

"But she may marry before you are ready to leave it."

"Well, that's it. I'd die a good bit happier if I knew she was comfortably fixed for life. I don't want a knock-kneed chap, with nuthin' but a pair of smart-looking whiskers and a soft voice, to walk off with all the money I doubled myself up getting."

The captain laughed softly to himself, and cast another look over to the corner where Brent was sitting, while the banker's eyes instinctively sought the same direction.

"Yes, I was looking at them," said the banker, meditatively, as if he had been addressed.

"Them?"

"Yes, Marcia and young Brent; and I don't half like it either," with a rumble in his throat. "See here, Shrike; you introduced that young man into my house, and vouched for him, or rather you said he was all right."

"Well, what is the matter with him?" interrupted the other, a little irritably.

"I don't object to the man's looks, and he acts fair enough, and works well enough when he has a mind to, though I take it he's kind of changeable, from those restless eyes of his. But that ain't neither here nor there. I want to know something about the man my girl is going to take up with for life. I'd like to see some of the back numbers of his record."

"Why, you don't think there is anything serious between them?" ventured the captain.

"I don't think anything," snapped the broker. "But he's been to our house three nights running this week,—on business I know; but he pays a good deal more attention to her than to me. They meet at some of these afternoon teas when I'm down town, and—and I don't exactly know what to do. I ain't disposed to be hard on a young man who's trying to get along in the world, but there is something about this chap that makes me suspicious."

"Of what?" asked the captain, quickly.

"Well, that's what I want to find out; that's what I came here to-night to see you about. I want you to tell me what you know about this Brent. The best isn't too good for Marcia, I can tell you. If I put my foot down, I'll break this affair off short; but if he's all right he shall have her. I've known you a good while, Shrike, and I think I can put a good deal of trust in you, and—"

"Hush!" said the captain, as Marcia and Brent walked by them just at that moment.

The girl's sweet oval face was flushed with a soft rose-color,

and her eyes were sparkling. Brent's looked weary and worn in the blue light that the chandelier cast over them.

Shrike said something under his breath as he bowed to them, and then the crowd swallowed them up. He took the broker's arm, and they made their way up-stairs to the smoking-room, which they found deserted by everyone except old Mr. Wixon, who had escaped from the crowd and was now sound asleep and snoring vociferously. The place offered every opportunity for a quiet talk.

In the meantime Brent and Marcia had left the crowded parlors and sought refuge in the embrasure of the dining-room bow-window.

"Your father and Captian Shrike seem to be holding a council-of-war to-night," said the young man, seating himself on an ottoman at her side.

"And you would rather not see them together?" she asked, studying his face. "Jack, I am afraid you are not very steadfast in your friendships. You used to go everywhere with Captain Shrike, and now you seldom speak to each other, that is, when I am around. I don't blame you for dropping his acquaintance, because I don't believe it will ever do you any good; but I am afraid you are fickle. Tell me why you have quarrelled."

Brent hesitated. "It is a long story, which you would not understand," flushing painfully and turning away his eyes. "We—we were partners in a business enterprise."

"Oh, I see; in some financial trouble. I heard that you had been speculating—in stock, I suppose?"

"Yes," he replied, laughing bitterly, "in live-stock. I may as well tell you," he continued, as she regarded him with wondering eyes, "that I was fool enough to enter into an agreement with Captain Shrike when I—when I first came to New York, an agreement which I now find myself unable to keep. It is this which has worried me all along."

The old, haggard look she had noticed of late came into his face as he turned away, unable to meet her steadfast gaze. He was in trouble, deep trouble, she could easily see.

"Don't tell me any more," she said gently, laying her hand softly on his shoulder. "I dare say you think me an officious, meddling little woman. I am glad there is nothing serious

the matter between you and Captain Shrike. I do not care to have him for a friend, but I should fear him as an enemy, relentless, unforgiving."

"Why, dear, we can afford to laugh at him," said Brent, looking up with a bright expression on his face. "I could never bring myself quite to hate him, even if I wanted to. I can never forget that it was through him I first met you."

"You don't believe much in fate, then?" she said, with a smile.

"Fate is nothing without opportunity," said Brent.

"And I was the opportunity you embraced, eh?" was the laughing response. "But I am afraid, Jack, we are losing all the entertainment," looking towards the crowded parlors. "Miss Murray is going to recite 'The Broken Heart.'"

"But you don't want to hear that again; I have heard it at least eight times this winter."

"And I not at all. Does she give any advice for mending broken hearts? It must be such an uncomfortable thing to carry around. I am sure Fanny Pixley has broken hers in small bits to distribute around, for it seems to me that fully ten of the men that I meet are in love with her, and that the others are about to become so. Give me your arm, Jack; it is time we returned."

"But why?" he pleaded. "Wait a few moments longer."

"We must not. We—we shall be talked about. Dear me, I am getting to say 'we' as fluently as an editor," smiling. "Come, Jack, don't be silly; give me your arm."

He drew a long face, and rose from his seat with a gesture of mock despair.

"Now, if we had not moved, your father would never have seen us," he said, as the broker's bald head was seen bobbing up and down like a cork at the other end of the room. "We—"

"Well, what about we?" she asked teasingly.

"We never have an opportunity to say two words to each other."

Just then, Mrs. Wixon clapped her hands for silence, as Mrs. Brasher was going to read a poem, so Brent and Marcia went back to their cosy corner to wait until it was over. Little attention did they pay to the poem or to the enthusiastic spouter,

with her waving arms and strident voice. They were thinking of something else, far more interesting perhaps, which flowed, too, in a poetic channel—something that interested them deeply, those two who sat alone in the soft-lit room. And as they must needs speak in a whisper, their heads were very close together. Let us respect their solitude.

An hour later Captain Shrike was seated at a table in the *café* of the Argentine Club, sipping a glass of absinthe. It was after midnight, and the captain had evidently been indulging in several other strong beverages besides that opalescent liquid which shimmered at his side, for his eyes looked weak and uncertain, and his head rolled about loosely. He had started in on a fresh glass when John Brent entered. The captain stopped drumming his white fingers on the polished table, and looked at him curiously.

"You look pretty gay to-night; been trying a game upstairs?" he asked.

"You know I never play cards," said the other quietly.

"Then something's put you in high feather. Oh, I know; I saw you to-night with the little Tillinghurst. That's it. Things are going finely. It was easy enough to see that;" and he laughed uproariously.

Brent looked at him nervously. He was irritated at the man's insolence, and his fingers twitched convulsively. But he only said, "You are disposed to have fun with me to-night, Captain Shrike. Pray leave Miss Tillinghurst's name out of the question."

"Ah, indeed! ain't I her friend, and her father's friend? Who are you who pretend to tell me when I shall use her name and when not?" asked Shrike hotly, bringing his hand down on the table with a thump.

"I'll tell you," said Brent, hoarsely, in a whisper; "I am the man she is going to marry; the man she accepted not an hour ago," taking him by the arm. "Do you remember what you said to me that night we stood by the house in Madison Square and she came down the steps? Well, it has all come true; your very words."

"Not yet," said Shrike, wagging his head back and forth in a maudlin way. "Not yet."

"Not yet?"

"No; I had a talk with Papa Tillinghurst this very night. He is rather doubtful of you. Wants me to vouch for your respectability, etc. It remains with me whether you get his consent or not."

"I know that, Shrike; I know that," said the other, a little excitedly. "But you'll say a good word for me, won't you?"

"I will not," said the other, bringing his fist down on the table with a bang that sent the glass into splinters, "not a damned word. Fool! Can't you see that I love her myself?"

CHAPTER XII.

BRENT'S CONFESSION.

WAS Captain Shrike in earnest, or had he been drinking and made the statement in a joke? This and a thousand other questions John Brent asked himself as he walked up and down his room that night. Something, however, persuaded him that the captain meant what he said; and look at the matter how he would, he could only see misery for himself in the future.

The events of the evening had completely unnerved him, and he was only adding to his agitation by smoking an indefinite number of cigarettes as he walked up and down the floor. To have learned from Marcia herself that she loved him, to have had the cup of happiness lifted to his lips, had filled him with a wild ecstasy. But the captain's words had dashed the cup from him, and he was helpless to save himself. He had never once imagined that Captain Shrike might possibly become a rival. He knew him to be an intimate friend of her father's, and was aware that of late he had been a frequent caller at their house; but beyond these things there was nothing in the captain's manner to indicate that he was in love with Marcia. It required no clairvoyant powers for Brent to foresee that, unless she was steadfast to him through good and ill report, and loved him with an unwavering faith which could not be shaken, his happiness was gone. It would not take a man like the captain very long to tear down the airy castle which he had built for his protégé, and send him out into the world again, branded as a fraud and a humbug, while he himself stepped into the niche left vacant.

Brent could imagine the delight there would be in certain circles when the truth became known. How the society papers would jeer at him, and hint that they knew of the humbug all along, and that it was another warning that New York circles should heed, and stop taking up nobodies without pro-

per investigation! It made Brent writhe when he thought of Marcia. Could she trust him after his deceit? He hardly dared flatter himself that she could, and yet it was the only slender straw he had to cling to. He resolved that he would tell Marcia everything the next night.

The gray morning was creeping in through the half-open shutters before he thought of sleep, and when the breakfast-bell rang he was still staring aimlessly at the ceiling, trying to realize his condition.

He went through his work at the mill mechanically that day, and was harsher than ever with the men. He was glad when it was all over, and he had a chance to slip out and away from the clatter of the machines and the rough voices about him, and be alone. He wanted to nerve himself up to the point so that he could tell her all that evening. He wanted to receive his sentence and be done with suspense. Shrike, he knew, would make the worst of the story if it was left to him to tell. Brent resolved to forestall him. How wearily the hours crept by until it was time to go! And yet he went by the house several times before he dared enter. Marcia received him in the little library that her father had arranged for her in the second story, where she spent most of her time reading and writing. She was deep in a book when he entered, and looked up with a pleased expression of surprise, that brought a bright blush to her cheek. He stood for some moments regarding her, thinking what a pretty picture she made in her white-cashmere watteau dress, trimmed with old lace, the only color being in her cheeks and in a rose half hidden in the lace at her breast, her shapely head half thrown back, a smile of welcome on her lips. He looked at her, and half a sigh escaped him.

"What does that sigh mean, sir?" she asked.

He had advanced as if he wanted to kiss her; then he hesitated and sat down.

"That sigh," he said, "was a sigh of satisfaction at being here, at seeing you."

"You don't say that as if you meant it, Jack, dear," with a certain sense of proprietorship in her voice; "and I should say by the tired look in your eyes that you were out late last night. Come now, weren't you?" provokingly.

"Only about an hour later than you. Fact is, Marcia, I couldn't sleep. *You* ought to know why as well as anybody else. It isn't a thing ~~that~~ happens very often in a fellow's life, so he can afford to lose one night's sleep in consequence."

"Do you know, you have an excellent reputation for keeping regular hours. That is, Fanny Pixley says so, who I suppose gets it from Fred. They say you are quite different from the generality of club men."

"What nonsense, Marcia! I am not any better than the average man, or any worse. You want to leave a wide margin for errors of judgment in your estimate of me," with a gloomy intonation in his voice.

"I don't think I have gone very far wrong," she said, softly. "The first time I ever saw you, I said to myself, 'Here is a man whose face is full of truth, and open as the day.' I have had no occasion since to doubt that estimate."

Brent smiled feebly. He could not look at her, but turned his head away as if to shut out the sight of her face.

"Marcia," he said finally, "has it ever occurred to you that you know very little about me? Let me see—how long is it since the Amsterdam Club had their ball?"

"It is just two months, reckoned by the calendar."

"Two months, and in that time we have met, loved, and become engaged."

"Now, my dear Jack, what are you trying to get at?"

"Only that you might be deceived in me after all. Society, you know, is full of adventurers. What if I should be one?"

"I don't understand you," she said, a little blankly. "If this is a jest—"

"But it is not a jest."

She started, and looked at him with an expression which denoted at once wonder and alarm.

"Oh, I am sober enough," he added, as if he thought she had a suspicion he had been dining out. "I tell you this, Marcia, to put you on your guard."

"As if I needed it! How queerly you talk!"

"I will tell you what I mean, if you will listen—something I have been wanting to tell you all along, only I was too big a coward."

"About yourself?"

"About myself." His lips trembled a little, and he drew a long breath.

"Go on," she said, and leaned her head on her hand again.

"Some months ago, a young man sat on the steps of a house in Madison Square. He was an outcast, in rags, cold, hungry, a stranger in the city." He waited as if he had expected her to say something, but she did not stir.

"It was night, and he was looking around for a place to sleep. Chance threw in his way a gentleman who offered to clothe him and put him on his feet again on certain conditions—that he would—" he hesitated and could not go on.

"I am listening," she said quietly; "what then?"

"On condition that he would marry a certain young lady of wealth, who would be thrown in his way. A part of her fortune was to be paid by this—this—outcast to the man who had cared for him."

"And then?"

"Things were so arranged," he went on slowly, "that this young man met the lady—they met often—they—"

"Oh, this is infamous!" cried Marcia, starting to her feet and walking away from him, twisting her handkerchief nervously in her fingers. "To be made the subject of such a shameful scheme, to be bartered for by two men as if I were a common creature of the streets! You need not mention the names—I know that you were the young man—and I—oh—" She sat down and wept, covering her face with her hands, her whole body shaken with sobs. He saw how miserable she was, and his heart bled for her.

"Don't make it too hard for me," he said hoarsely, going towards her.

She made a movement to waive him back, but he paid no attention to it.

"Marcia, for God's sake hear me out," he pleaded, "and then judge me. I was forced into this thing. I was desperate at the time, and would have grasped at anything to save myself. You cannot understand. You are young; life is dear to you. You don't know what it is to be alone and starving in a pitiless city, such as this. The temptation was so great, the risk so small. I saw that, sooner or later, I must be driven even to crime. For I wanted to live, and I was dying

slowly by inches. When this man came, I was ready for anything; I did not stop to count the cost. I knew his offer meant food, home, clothes, and I seized it. I was weary of the struggle for life, and saw a chance to lift myself out of want."

"But your honor?" she murmured.

"Honor!" he said, "ah, what thinks a starving man of honor? That night I began to play the part I have sustained ever since, of a Western millionaire; and everyone believed in me. Marcia, as God is my witness, my love for you is an honest one. It is hard for you to believe me under the circumstances, but I swear it is true. It has made the burden all the harder for me to bear, to love you so and then deceive you."

"And this man, this other man?" she asked.

"Was Captain Shrike."

"I thought so," was the answer.

"When I first found out that I loved you," he added, "I tried to break away, but my courage failed me. I was not strong enough. I still wanted to linger on in a fool's paradise, and comfort my conscience with promises that you should know all. Well, you do know all now," he said bitterly—"every jot of my perfidy. Now, say you despise me and let me go."

She did not seem to understand what he said, but sat still and motionless, with her eyes on the ground. The crackling anthracite in the grate was the only sound that broke the stillness.

"Have you told me all this of your own accord?" she asked, at length, raising her head, but not looking at him.

"I will be frank with you," he stammered. "You shall know all I have to tell. You may as well hear it from my lips as another. After leaving you last night—" he paused, and drew a long breath—"I went to the club. Shrike and I had a quarrel. He said I should never marry you, that he loved you himself."

She shuddered, and Brent was glad.

"Fighting for possession!" Marcia said. "What have I done that I should be placed in such a position? Oh, Jack,

how could you ? ” covering her face with her hands and sobbing as if her heart would break.

“ Ah, how could I, indeed ? ” he groaned, kneeling beside her. “ Don’t be lenient towards me, for I deserve to be punished. When I knew I loved you, Marcia, I could not tell you. Oh, I could not give you up.”

She saw him kneeling there, with his face buried in his hands, overcome with the grief of the moment, and she pitied him.

“ Leave me now,” she said; “ I must think over all you have said.”

“ I dare not ask for any hope,” he said sadly. “ I know there can be no forgiveness.”

“ I suppose this story will all come out in the papers; everybody will know it ? ” she asked, wearily.

“ We are in Captain Shrike’s power. It remains to be seen what he will do.”

“ I expect no mercy from him,” she replied, clinching her teeth.

“ Oh, what misery I have brought upon you ! ” he said, penitently. “ Who could have foreseen this trouble ? ”

“ Yet I am glad you told me.”

“ Glad ? ”

“ Yes, glad ; for now, at least, we start fair. You have told me everything ? ”

“ Everything that has happened since I came to New York.”

“ And before that ? ”

“ Before that I lived in St. Louis for three years. My home was in a little town in Michigan, called Carter’s Ford.”

“ And you are alone in the world ? ”

“ Alone,” he said, sadly. “ But I have pained you enough for one evening,” as he took up his hat and coat to go. “ Try and think of me as kindly as you can,” he added, regarding her wistfully.

She did not turn her head.

“ I shall not see you again until—until you send for me. Silence will spare you the pain of a refusal. Good-night.”

“ Good-night,” she answered softly, half turning her head.

He lingered a moment, then turned away with a sigh, and

groped his way down the dimly-lit stairs. Would he ever go up that flight with a lightened heart again, he wondered.

Captain Shrike was just coming in the front-door as he opened it to go out. He almost stumbled over him.

"Well, is our fair friend in a mood for a pleasant surprise?" asked the captain, insolently.

"I have spared you the trouble," said Brent, coldly; "I have told her myself."

Something in the expression of his face warned Shrike that it would be perilous for him to say more, and he made way for Brent to pass by.

"Well, I'll be d——," said the captain, under his breath, in a tone of surprise.

Then he suddenly forgot what he had come for, and walked hastily away in the opposite direction to that which Brent had taken.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTAIN MAKES A DISCOVERY.

It was ten o'clock the next morning when Brent sought Captain Shrike's room, resolved to know the worst. He felt too shaken by the occurrences of the past few days to go to the mills, and had telegraphed an excuse to Mr. Tillinghurst, explaining his necessary absence.

Captain Shrike received his visitor with an affable smile. He was seated in a soft arm-chair, by a window in the room where Brent had first become acquainted with the inner workings of the Impecunious Club. He wore the same gorgeous dressing-gown as on that memorable occasion, and he was puffing a huge cigarette, which sent out volumes of perfumed smoke.

Brent sat down, without waiting to be asked, in a corner of the room. He was silent for some moments, not knowing exactly how to begin the conversation. The appearance of Shrike, smiling and debonair, rather squelched the bitter words he had come to say. The captain's coolness and sangfroid acted as a cold douche on his passion, and he grew singularly calm.

"You are looking rather ratty this morning, me boy," said the captain, pushing a decanter towards him, which stood on the centre-table. "Here! take a drink; you'll feel better." As Brent did not avail himself of the offer, he went on: "I see by that rueful countenance of yours, that you have called on me to make some disagreeable remarks; in short, to kick up a fuss with yours truly. Eh, am I right?" showing his white, even teeth. "You are the easiest man to read I ever met."

"I came simply to ask," said Brent, coldly, "what you are going to do?"

The captain burst out laughing. "Well, come now, that's good. What am I going to do? Why, pursue the even tenor of my nefarious career, to put it in high-flown language. It isn't

a question of what *I* am going to do, but what *you* are going to do? You are in the position of a squatter who has been occupying ground that didn't belong to him. The rightful owner comes along—in this case it is me—and you have to remove. It seems to me you are a very hard young man to suit, if I know anything. In the first place, you are offered an opportunity to marry a very estimable young lady, and are supplied with the means whereby you can cut a respectable figure in society; and all the time you growl because you don't think you are doing the right thing in selling yourself, etc. And now, when that objection is removed, and you have ample opportunity to develop your highly moral principles on bread and water, the proper fare for the virtuous, why, you are again disposed to kick in the traces. Man, what do you want?" exclaimed the captain, in mild exasperation.

"What do I want?" asked the other. "You know well enough what I want. You dragged me into this thing. Through you I met Marcia Tillinghurst. I am not forgetful that you have done many things for me, though you have been only acting for your own interest all along." He was talking with vehemence now, his face growing flushed and excited.

"But I will be fair," put in the captain, mildly. "You shall not be left without means. I don't mind——"

"Fool!" cried Brent; "do you think it is money I want?"

He could not trust himself to say any more, but paced up and down the room nervously.

"On the day I am married to Miss Tillinghurst," pursued the captain, without apparently noticing that he had been interrupted, "you shall have five thousand dollars."

"But," sneered the other, "why do you imagine you can ever win her?"

"Oh, that will be no trouble," nodding his head confidently, "you being out of the race."

"But I am not out of the race."

"No? I thought you were. What do you think Papa Tillinghurst will say when he learns that you are a humbug, a fraud, an adventurer. Now, don't get excited, me dear boy," as the other started to his feet. "Of course, I am speaking in figurative language. Well, what do you think the worthy papa will say to such an alliance?"

"I will leave that to Marcia," murmured Brent, who saw too well the hopelessness of his position.

"And you are sure of her affection?"

"Quite sure."

"Ah, well, women change their passions about as often as they do their bonnets. The affection she may have formed for you is at best a sentimental one. Her father favors my suit, and always has. He has hinted to me time and again that he would like me for a son-in-law. That alone is a very big point in my favor. His daughter is very fond of him, and will try to obey his wishes. It may be a slight wrench at first, when she finds she must give you up, but she will soon get used to her new position."

"A very nice programme you have laid out," said the other, bitterly. "And what is to become of me in the meantime? How do you dispose of me?"

"I should advise you to disappear, to sink back into the same oblivion from which I drew you, now that you have no further use for the name of John Brent. By the way, what is your real name? It has entirely slipped my mind."

"Impossible, for I never told you," said the other dryly. "But you were disposing of me. Go on, I beg."

"Well, of course I want you to resign as superintendent of the Empire Mills."

"That is, you demand that I shall."

"Well, yes, if you put it in that way. It would save a great deal of disagreeable explanation on my part. It will be just as easy, if you will follow my instructions, to sink out of sight as quickly as you appeared, without any fuss and without any scandal. See?"

"And what if I were to turn round and make an exposure of you and your confederates in the Impecunious Club? Did that ever occur to you?" said Brent, trying to play a bold card.

"Oh, yes," said the captain, blandly; "that has occurred to me, dear boy, and been weighed and considered. I think your chances of pulling me down are very small. In the first place it would be an unequal struggle of twelve against one, and you would not be strong enough to meet us in a fair fight. Your social reputation has been entirely built up through my

instrumentality. What is easier than for me to whisper in the ears of those who have had the favor of entertaining you, that I have been very much deceived in your character, that I have been imposed upon, and that they ought to look out for themselves; that we have made a mistake, etc.?"

"And you would go about telling this?"

"Certainly. Why not? An architect who has built a house wrong certainly ought to have the privilege of pulling the structure down. I made you; it is my privilege to unmake you."

The captain made all these statements with a smiling air, as if he were reading a copy of a comic paper. If he noticed at all that his visitor was suffering, he said nothing, but rattled off his remarks imperturbed, as if they were pleasantries. Brent was no match for the other's volubility, so he went over to the window and stood looking out on the copper-colored river, as it flowed by Blackwell's Island. He almost envied the convicts at work on the grass-plots in front of the gray-stone buildings, he felt so friendless and miserable at that moment. He knew the captain was a strong rival, and doubt would rise, though he tried to drive it out of his heart, that Marcia might not be able to withstand the strong pressure brought against her, and that she would give way, and Shrike would triumph. He did not want to think this. He wanted to believe that she would remain true through all his deception, and trust him in spite of the world.

"I know what you are thinking about," broke in the captain's voice harshly. "You are thinking about playing the hand alone. Well, I admire your pluck, and I am very sorry it could not have been used in a more promising struggle. I am really sorry."

"Spare me your pity," said Brent. "I have not fallen so low that I need that."

"Bitter, eh?" laughed the captain, good-naturedly; "bitter against your benefactor, who has made a millionaire of you and clothed you all these months. Ah me, the ingratitude of this world! A real philanthropist is never properly appreciated until he dies. I really don't see how you can blame me if you have fallen in love with the young lady. I never bargained with you for that. In love and war, me boy, you

know, we cannot but avail ourselves of the arms at hand. I am your rival. I am the strongest in the fight, and you must go under. It is the law of life, and we must obey it."

"We shall see," said Brent, turning around. "I have still the egotism to think that I have some chance in this race. The prize will be to the swift."

"Then you are not going to take up with my offer? Remember, it means five thousand dollars, immunity from scandal, the only condition being that you slip out of sight."

"And I refuse it. You have everything, you think, in your favor. Well, we shall see. I am confident that she has not entirely forgotten me."

For once the captain lost his temper and swore. "You are a headstrong idiot. Having entangled yourself in a hopeless snarl, you will not let me assist you out of it. You are rather excited now, and due allowance must be made for that: I will give you until Saturday to make up your mind whether you will follow my prescription or not. Then, if you are still stubborn, why, in vulgar parlance, I will 'blow the gaff.'"

"My answer will be the same then as to-day," said Brent, taking up his hat. "I should be unworthy of any good woman's love if I allowed myself to be bought off for five thousand dollars," he added hotly, as he turned to the door.

"You will have a different story to tell next week," said the captain, rising with the same bland smile, which had never left his face but once during the conversation.

The other bowed and walked out of the house. The captain sat down in his arm-chair again, and for five minutes puffed industriously at his cigarette.

"It's a pity we had to come to a quarrel. There's something about Brent that I can't help liking. Confound the dog, there is something in him in spite of his mulishness. But it won't do for me to turn soft now. He means fight, and I shall have to give it to him. When he finds that all his supplies are to be cut off, and that he must drop from Delmonico's to Chatham Street restaurants, why, it may bring him to his knees. I'll get out that old suit he wore the night I found him in Madison Square. I've never hunted through it to find out what his real name is."

He left his comfortable arm-chair with a sigh, and unlocked

the closet door. He found all the old clothes rolled up on the top shelf, and dragged them down with a gas-lighter, which stood by the fire-place.

"Well, to think that that howling swell once occupied these old rags!" was the captain's comment, as he poked among the shabby garments. "I can't afford to be fastidious if I want to find out anything," he muttered, as he fished up an old unbleached shirt out of the pile and examined it critically. On the tag at the end of the bosom he could see some faint marks, as if a name had once been written there. He carried it to the light and examined it closely. Then he whistled loud and long, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure. Yes, undoubtedly, the marks stood for a name. He adjusted his glasses and finally made out the letters. They spelt George Walton or Waldon—he could not exactly make up his mind which. He put the rags back in the closet, but the tag he cut off and placed in his pocket-book.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. GREDGE APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

AT nine o'clock on that evening, Captain Rivington Shrike, attired in full dress, a white kersey top-coat, and with his military moustache waxed in two formidable spikes, tripped out of the door of the club-house in Beekman Place, and sauntered towards his carriage, which stood in waiting. He was in excellent humor, it would seem, for he whistled a merry air from an opera bouffe as he buttoned his kid gloves, and his step was light on the pavement. As he was getting into his carriage someone touched him on the shoulder, and a whining voice at his elbow exclaimed:

"You haven't the price of a pint, mebbe, have you now, Mr. Shrike?"

The captain turned to confront a trembling, withered old man, in a seedy diagonal suit, so covered with mud that its owner must have been rolling in the gutter. The whining voice came from behind a dirty yellow beard, forming the fringe to a dull red face, from which two bleary blue eyes looked at the captain piteously.

"It ain't likely as you'd know me, I'm that changed," shivered the remnant, in a quavering voice.

"Come here," said Shrike, shortly, pushing him with no gentle hand in the direction of the street lamp.

Under the light he examined the dirty man critically and slowly, and then gave a prolonged whistle of surprise.

"I should say," he drawled, "that you were once David Gredge."

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," quavered the other, in his feeble piping voice, as he rubbed his bony hands together. "That's it; I was once Dave Gredge, but I'm nothin' but his ghost now. Things have changed since them days, Mr. Shrike—that is, Captain Shrike. The wheels has taken another turn, and those as was up is down. I've been going down and down, lower

than I ever thought a body could go. There don't seem to be any bottom when ye get started," with a long sigh like a whine.

"You don't blame anyone but yourself, I hope," said the captain, curtly, for he was beginning to tire of the old man's loquacity. "You brought it all on yourself."

"I don't blame nobody," said Gredge, sadly. "It's my own fault that I'm where I am. I know it; I ain't had any cause to forget it."

"Well, come, come ; don't keep me here all night. I am in a hurry. Here's a dollar, if that is any good to you."

The old man seized the bill eagerly and thrust it away in the lining of his greasy hat.

"I—I didn't know but you might put me in the way o' gettin' somethin' to do?" eagerly.

The captain laughed outright.

"Why, man, you couldn't keep a place for a week. You lost your position with Tillinghurst through drink, and it has been the same story ever since. It's too late for you to pull in. You know it yourself."

"But is it right," he whined, "that John Tillinghurst, whom I worked for years ago, when he hadn't hardly a dollar, should be livin' in high style, while I tramp the streets like a stray dog? He thinks I'm dead; and mighty glad the thought makes him, I dare say. If he knew I was still on deck, it 'ud spoil some of his sleep o' nights," rubbing his dirty palms together in a thoughtful way. "It 'ud give him some bad dreams."

"You don't seem to love your old employer," said Shrike.

"Well, I guess not; I ain't any cause to. I served him so well when he was a poor man, and he might have given me a show when he grew rich, instead o' turnin' me out to die in the streets. Like him?" he added, with vehemence; "I'd like to get him down where I am, and let him suffer as I have suffered."

His anger was so terrible that Shrike drew back in alarm. There was something horrible in the rage of this miserable old man, still quivering from the effects of a recent debauch, his watery-blue eyes rolling in their sockets, and his dirty, yellow hair blowing about his face,

A thought suddenly struck the captain. Perhaps Gredge knew something about Tillinghurst, something that might be used to bring the millionaire to terms.

"This is rather dry work talking here," he said, carelessly; "suppose we adjourn where we can have a chat in private."

The eyes of the old man lit up, and he rubbed his poor lips together as if he scented liquor afar off. The prospect of a drink stimulated him to keep up with Shrike's military stride, and he shuffled along the pavement like a much younger man.

Second Avenue was but a step, and they soon found themselves established in a little room off the bar of the corner saloon. The captain ordered sherry for himself and a bottle of gin and some water for Gredge, and after the waiter had gone away and closed the door, he said impatiently: "Now, if you have anything to tell, be quick about it. I have an appointment at ten, and it is now half-past nine," looking at his watch.

Mr. Gredge, having absorbed two glasses of gin-and-water, leaned back in his chair in a comfortable attitude, and seemed in no hurry whatever to begin. "I don't see, beggin' your pardon, what difference it could make to a gent like you, if me and Tillinghurst did have a row," eyeing the captain curiously.

"That is my business," said the other quietly. "You were once his confidential clerk; you knew all his secrets. It was only a few months before you left his employ that he mysteriously rose from being a second-hand furniture dealer and tenement-house banker to——"

"Yes, that was a jump," interrupted Gredge, pouring himself out a stiff drink, and draining the glass without drawing breath. "There ain't many men could do the trick as he done, steppin' from a dirty store on Seventh Avenue to the Rawdon Building on Broadway. Wonder what become of the owner of that big building. Another man that Tillinghurst plowed under, though he was a proud old duffer, and likely deserved what he got. S'pose he's drinkin' himself to death or tryin' to, somethin' like me;" and Gredge sighed, and had resource to the bottle again to drown his thoughts.

Captain Shrike was in despair. Gredge already looked drowsy, and might fall asleep in the midst of the conversation. Fifteen minutes had passed, and still the old book-keeper was

far away from the subject in which he was interested. Something must be done.

"Come, come," he said, shaking the old man by the arm impatiently; "I didn't come here to listen to the story of your life. I may give you five dollars if I hear anything interesting. You were talking about John Tillinghurst."

"I was just getting to that," said Gredge. "How you do hurry a chap, to be sure! I—I don't know as I got much to tell anyway," with a foolish leer. "Leastways, *you* wouldn't think it much."

"I can tell better when I hear what it is. Here, take another drink," pushing the bottle towards him.

"I will take another, thank you kindly, Mr. Shrike. Well, as I was sayin', you have wondered, perhaps, by what trick Tillinghurst got to be a rich man?"

Shrike nodded.

"I know you wouldn't care to hear the story unless you was going to use it against him, and that's what I want. Nobody would believe me, if I told all I know, for he's too high up and I'm too low down, so I'll let you take it out of him. Tillinghurst, you know, never had any family. He was born in the streets, and got his livin' as best he could, just as I am now. He had scraped together some money as a pedler, and with that he started in a basement on Seventh Avenue, dealing in old furniture, second-hand stuff, and lendin' money at big interest to poor folks in the neighborhood. I was his chief clerk, cashier, errand boy, and general utility, and took a hand too in cleanin' stoves and rubbing up furniture. Tillinghurst did a good deal of speculation, too, and made quite a reputation on the Street among the small brokers, who thought him a cautious buyer and a good man to follow."

Mr. Gredge paused to take another drink, and then proceeded: "But Tillinghurst had a run of bad luck, and began using the money that had been deposited with him, and all that was swallowed up in speculations. I knew he was getting ready to skip out of town the moment he saw the jig was up, but I said nothing, because I thought there might be a chance for me to carry on the business. Things was looking pretty black, when one day an elderly sort o' woman came into the shop and asked for Tillinghurst. They talked to-

gether for about two hours, and though I listened at the partition, I couldn't hear a word."

"And you don't know the result of that conversation?" asked the captain, eagerly.

"Oh, bless you, yes. Tillinghurst told me afterwards that the woman was a relation of his from the West, and that she had come on to see him with a view of investing some money."

"And is that all?"

"Not yet. The worst is to come," said the ex-clerk, stopping to mop the perspiration from his forehead with a dingy handkerchief. "The very next morning that woman was picked up near the pier at the foot of West Twenty-second Street—dead!"

"Dead?"

"Yes; and there was no receipt found on the body that she had ever given Tillinghurst a cent."

"But you don't mean to insinuate, man, that he had anything to do with her death?"

"No—no. He was a bad 'un, but he always kept as much as he could inside the law. It was only chance that threw her in his way."

"But the money, what became of that?"

"Nobody knows but Tillinghurst. It was a few months after her death that he blossomed out as a financier. Mind you, I don't accuse him o' stealin' that money. Oh no," with a chuckle; "I wouldn't for the world; but it was a queer affair—a mighty queer affair."

"But this—this woman must have had relations who would look after her interests—who must have known of this money," pursued Shrike.

"No, I don't think she had a soul to look after her. I found out in an indirect way that she left a little son out in the Western town which she came from, and I guess it was on his account that she wanted to invest this money."

"And you heard nothing more of the boy?"

"Not a word," said Gredge, drowsily. "As no one knew the woman's name but us two, she was buried without any, at Tillinghurst's expense. He made capital out of her funeral, you may imagine."

"And you, I suppose, aided him in robbing the orphan of

his inheritance?" asked Shrike. "Gredge, you are a bigger scoundrel than I thought you were."

"'Scuse me, Cap'n, but what could I do? Had no proofs he ever got any money. Poor men can't be too particular." The liquor was beginning to affect him, and his head swayed to and fro as he sat there. "'Sides, none o' my bishness lookin' up a orphan. I shpose now I'll get my five dollarsh," holding out a trembling hand.

"You don't deserve it," said Shrike, with contempt, laying a gold piece on the table.

Gredge fumbled at it blindly in his drunken way, but could not lift it up: at length his head drooped and he fell forward in a stupor.

Captain Shrike rose to go. "If what he has told me to-night is true," standing over the crouching figure, "my time has been well spent."

He walked out of the room on tiptoe, for fear of disturbing the other's drunken slumbers, and told the bar-keeper to look after Gredge when he should wake. The moment he found himself on the sidewalk a sudden thought struck him like an inspiration. He returned hastily to the room where he had left Gredge.

The drunken book-keeper was snoring vociferously, his face buried in a dirty coat-sleeve, surrounded by a puddle of spilt gin that trickled out of a broken bottle at his side.

Captain Shrike seized him by the arm and shook him vigorously, but he still snored on. It was not until a syphon of soda-water had been squirted into his face, accompanied by several vigorous kicks from the captain's lacquered boots, that he regained consciousness.

"Shtrange!" he murmured; "didn't look like rainsh," rubbing his eyes with a dirty fist.

"Here, wake up," with another kick.

"Oh, it's you, Shrike?"

"Yes, I want to ask you a question."

"Good old Shrike—good old—" he murmured brokenly.

"What was the name of this woman who was found on the pier?" asked the captain, bending down to the other's ear.

"What woman?" blinking his eyes.

"The woman you were telling about, you know, that called

on Tillinghurst. Here's another dollar to make you remember better," laying it on the table.

"Her name was—" but his eyes closed as if he was going off into sound slumber again.

"Yes, what was it?" asked Shrike, eagerly.

"Wa—Wa—Wa—Waldon," yawned the book-keeper, doubling up again on the table and resuming his snoring.

"Waldon!" exclaimed the captain, his face brightening up. "Ah, the devil is working well for me to-night. You can't refuse me for a son-in-law now, John Tillinghurst," as he left the room hastily, with a triumphant step.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLOW FALLS.

ABOUT the same time in the evening that Captain Shrike's *coupé* drew up at the Tillinghurst mansion, John Brent was seated before the fire in his room, reading over for the twentieth time a note he had received at the dinner-table.

"I shall expect you on Wednesday," Marcia had written, "between three and four, when everything can be explained."

He could hardly take his eyes off the handwriting; every curve and twist in the characters seemed to fill him with new hope. He had left his fate in her hands, and now, of her own free will, she had called him back. It would have been so easy, he argued over and over again to himself, to have remained silent, the least painful of all refusals. But she had written, had called him to her side. What other construction could he put on her words, but that she loved him well enough to defy society and the world for his sake? Such an exultation filled his heart that had the whole Impecunious Club been present, headed by Captain Shrike, he could have snapped his fingers in their faces and thrown down the gauntlet of his defiance. In all the months he had lived in the bubbling gayety of New York society, he had never felt so joyous and light-hearted as at that moment. A feeling of intense relief possessed his spirit, as if he had rid himself of some vexing burden that lay heavy on his soul.

It was daybreak before he went to bed. What did he care for sleep? He did not want to forget. He wanted to live in the present, that was now so sweet. There all his dreams, his hopes, his ambitions centred.

When he came down to the breakfast-table after his sleepless night, a letter in a yellow envelope lay at his plate. He recognized John Tillinghurst's crooked chirography at a glance. He took it up and looked at it curiously.

"Some instructions about the mills, I suppose," he said carelessly, as he opened it with a table-knife.

"You will not be surprised to hear," wrote Mr. Tillinghurst, "that the hands at the Empire Mills have struck for eight hours a day at the same wages. I have made up my mind to shut up the mills rather than give in. A few months' living on bread and water, or even less, will bring these chaps to their knees. At least, I'm going to see how the scheme'll work. Under the circumstances, I am compelled to dispense with your services. Thanking you for the faithful manner you have conducted my business," etc.

"At least, Shrike has not exposed me yet," murmured Brent. He noticed that the letter bore the postmark of the morning before. It had evidently been delayed in coming. For the present, at least, he was safe. He even began to hope that, at the last moment, Captain Shrike had been tempted to relent and save him from exposure; yet he hardly dared cherish such a Utopian dream.

The loss of his position as superintendent of the Empire Mills troubled him very little. He had never been paid any salary, and he had been offered a better position in a broker's office by a club acquaintance. He was sorry for the men, who would suffer bitterly in the end. Knowing the unyielding nature of the millionaire, he had warned the hands at the mill that they were making a hazardous experiment in crossing his will.

The voices of demagogues and pot-house orators, however, had prevailed, and they had struck. To the many it meant great discomfort and want, and even starvation; but conscious that they were doing a brave act in defying the capitalists, they had closed their ears to the supplications of their wives and children, and marched to battle against a more fearful foe than monopoly—the ravening wolf of want and hunger.

Brent finished his breakfast in short order, for he was too excited to care to eat. He went out into the street to walk off some of the nervousness he felt, before making that momentous call on Marcia that was to make or mar his life.

The day was bright with sunshine, and Fifth Avenue gay with people. Everyone of importance seemed about, eager to bask in the generous warmth of the sun, that caused the silver

and gold harnesses to sparkle on the horses clattering down the street, and brought out in greater relief the colors in the bright winter costumes worn by the women.

Brent thought he had never seen that famous thoroughfare so filled with life; and the tinkle of boots, the clatter of horses, and the occasional voices of the drivers were like a pleasant song in his ears.

The rector of the Heavenly Hope came hurrying along, his arms filled with soberly bound volumes, the long tails of his clerical coat flying in the wind.

"I did not see you at church last Sunday," he gasped, drifting up alongside of Brent. "So sorry, for the Bishop of Ripon was present, and delivered a most eloquent address on the subject of foreign missions. Several in the congregation were very much affected."

Brent wanted to ask to what amount of money they had been affected, but only said:

"I am afraid business matters, of late, have occupied my mind more than spiritual, Mr. Satine. You may have heard of the trouble at the Empire Mills. Mr. Tillinghurst probably told you."

"No, not exactly," said the clergyman with a sigh; "and yet I suspected something must be wrong, as he only contributed half the sum he did last year to the mission fund," shaking his head sadly. "What seems to be the difficulty?"

"The men have struck."

"Misguided creatures!" murmured Mr. Satine, lifting his eyes heavenward, and raising his hands with a despairing gesture. "When will the toiling millions learn not to abuse their God-given power? I fear they have much misery in store for them, poor creatures!"

"I wonder you don't labor among them," said Brent slyly; "I am sure there could be no grander field a man could choose for mission work."

"True—true!" said the minister, with an air of conviction. "And yet they prefer to worship a demagogue instead of a God. I will consult with Mr. Tillinghurst, and see if something cannot be done. Bless me! but I hear of nothing but strikes all the town over. Some of the most solid and respect-

able men in my congregation have been actually threatened by these lawless men."

"I have no doubt," said Brent. "Perhaps if the rich members of your congregation spent less on foreign missions and paid better wages, there would be less want, and the Christian religion would make quite as much advance. These poor people have their own wrongs, Mr. Satine; it is not strange that, in their anger, they sometimes strike blindly."

"I am afraid your position as superintendent of the Mills has given your mind a socialistic bias," said Mr. Satine, shaking his head. "The time has come when capital must take decisive action, or it will be overwhelmed. I am worried at the aspect of things. These meetings that are being held nightly in the lower part of the city mean danger. It looks like a second French revolution."

Mr. Satine shivered at the thought, and looked around him hurriedly, as if he expected the arrival of a mob bent on murder.

"It would be a bad thing for the members of your church, Mr. Satine," said Brent, maliciously. "I believe the richest men in the town have pews in your church."

"It is so reported," with satisfaction. "I believe my congregation have been singularly blessed in this world's riches, and for that reason I am anxious. What do you think, Mr. Brent, of the trouble?"

"I think we are on' the eve of a great crisis. The hundred thousand men who are out of employment in this city must find some vent for their animal strength before long. They will not starve contentedly while so much extravagance and luxury exist among the rich. Unless something is done to employ the strength of these idlers, the city, in a few weeks, will be ripe for anarchy."

"You alarm me," exclaimed the minister, raising his hands with a despairing gesture. "Well, come what will, you will find the rector of the Heavenly Hope at the side of his congregation, should the Lord see fit to visit them with trials, Mr. Brent;" and Mr. Satine, with a bow, disappeared with his books into a brown-stone house they were just passing.

"Much he cares about the poor!" said Brent, as he con-

tinued his way. "He is thinking more of his fifteen thousand a year salary than of ameliorating anybody's condition."

On the corner of one of the streets he saw Joe Skerritt and a group of idlers, some of whom he remembered as having been employed once at the Empire Mills. Joe acknowledged his salutation with a cheery "Good morning," but the others only scowled and nodded. Brent had always taken a fancy to Joe, and felt sorry he was mixed up in the strike. There was good material in the lad, but he would be ruined by such company.

Knots of idlers such as he had passed were visible on nearly every corner. It was an unusual sight on that fashionable thoroughfare, sacred to the plutocracy. The men were quiet enough, but there was something mysterious about their manner as they chatted together. The views which Brent had stated to the rector of the Heavenly Hope revived in his mind. The officious policemen saw that the groups did not remain standing long in one place, but that they scattered, only to gather again on another block. It looked as if half of the unemployed in the city had taken possession of the street. As the men passed by some of the more elegant houses, they made remarks in a jeering way, and a chambermaid who was washing a window came in for her share of their boisterous attempts at humor.

Some of Mr. Satine's misgivings arose in Brent's thoughts as he strode along that bright morning. He was an unemployed man himself; he had no money but a few dollars in the world, and he sympathized with them. But he could think of nothing else but the face he expected to meet that afternoon. Would it be with a smile or a frown? He knew that his future was in her keeping. She could make or mar him by her answer. He spent the morning roaming about down-town among his business acquaintances. Everything was dull on Wall Street, owing to the unsettled aspect of the labor market. He was in hopes that he might see a chance to get something to do, and he received a good deal of encouragement. Freddy Pixley was delighted at the prospect of getting Brent into his office, and made an engagement on the spot. They had lunch together at two o'clock, and a bottle of wine, and Brent took the Elevated up to Forty-second Street

in a very comfortable frame of mind. He felt as light-hearted as a school-boy, and whistled as he crossed the park towards the great house whose massive front rose above the neighboring chimney-pots. What was she doing ? what was she thinking about ? he wondered. As he went up the steps, there was the sound of a window being shut down in the upper story ; but he thought nothing of it as he rang the bell.

"This card for Miss Tillinghurst," he said to the lackey who opened the door, thrusting the pasteboard into the man's palm instead of laying it on the salver.

"Well, why don't you start ?" as the dignitary in blue and gold showed no signs of moving, but eyed him stolidly as he arranged his hair at the hall mirror.

"If you please, sir, Miss Tillin'urst is out," he said gently.

"Out !" exclaimed Brent, almost choking. "Out !" he echoed.

"Out, I said, sir."

"But I am here by appointment," stammered the young man. Then, suddenly aware of the absurdity of his position in attempting to explain matters to a flunkey, he found strength enough to say, as he turned on his heel, "Well, when she comes in, give her this card. I—I may call later."

The great door swung behind him. The street before him seemed swimming like a river. There was a mist wherever he looked, and he had to grope his way down the steps by holding on to the balustrade. The sword had fallen. She was lost to him forever !

"You have been calling on our friend over the way ?" asked a cheery voice at his elbow, as he crossed the street.

Captain Shrike stood before him, twirling his cane and looking at him curiously.

"Yes," with an attempt at a laugh to hide his evident emotion.

"And they were out ?"

"I do not see why I should answer you," said Brent, in a hoarse voice.

"Certainly not," was the cool reply. "But I was going to suggest that if you call on Mr. Tillinghurst you will find him in his office. Marcia I just saw at the window as you were

coming out;" and, with a nod, his tormentor strolled down the avenue.

Brent stood looking after him blankly. Was it true? Had she been there all the time? He turned the corner and looked up at the house again. But its window eyes were blank, and all the curtains drawn. What did it matter anyway? She had given him up forever.

He staggered on without seeing where he was going. The weather changed towards evening and a heavy rain fell. He did not heed it, though it wet him to the skin. He saw nothing; he heard nothing. He ran into people on his way, and several times came near being beaten down by the horses' feet in crossing the streets. When he finally came to the East River, the noise around the docks acted on his nerves, and aroused him somewhat from the lethargy into which he had fallen.

Along the docks the gin-mills flashed forth their myriad lights. Drunken stevedores and sailors jostled each other on the sidewalks. A man with his face bleeding from a recent wound was singing vociferously a song about home and mother, as he sat unsteadily on a fire-plug. Two children fought over a can of beer they were taking into a sailor's lodging-house, whose windows, like bleared eyes, looked out through the rain.

The rattle of tins and glasses being filled for thirsty customers mingled with street sounds. Brent shuddered in spite of himself, and turned away and resumed his aimless journey through the mist and rain. His eyeballs seemed too large for their sockets, and pained him; his heart seemed on fire, and was consuming him; while his brain reeled and his breath came thick and hard. He crawled out to the end of one of the wharves, and looked down on the gray and sullen waters that flowed softly by the shiny posts towards the sea. The mist had blotted out the sight of the city, and across the gray expanse came the dull sound of fog-horns. Lights, green and blue and red, flitted like strange fire-flies through the misty veil that hid the shipping. He reached out his hands towards the waters, and reeled and fell.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALMOST A LIFE.

ON the same night that Captain Shrike encountered Gredge, he had a long interview with Mr. Tillinghurst in the broker's private study. The discussion had evidently pleased him, for he whistled to himself as he made his way down the dimly lighted stairs. The hour was late, and the butler had gone the rounds to turn down the lights, so he had to grope his way towards the door. Even when he stumbled over the hat-rack in his exit, the triumphant look never left his face, and he even repressed the favorite oath that was always ready on his lips.

John Tillinghurst waited until the street-door clanged on his departing visitor, and then returned to the arm-chair in front of his desk, which he sank into with a sigh. The gas-light shining through the globe of opalescent glass showed a pale, drawn face and quivering lips. The interview that was just over had changed him from a genial, smiling individual into a worn and tired old man. Could this drawn, despairing face belong to the successful capitalist? this limp, dejected form embody the soul of the most undaunted financier of his time? He hardly knew himself as he looked for a moment in the hand-glass at his side, and he had to resort to the decanter in his closet a number of times before the color was restored to his pallid, flabby cheeks.

The glass shook so in his quivering hands at first that he could hardly get it to his lips, and he finally threw it from him with a curse, and drank from the decanter long and deep.

"What a coward you are getting to be in your old age, John!" he said to himself. "Brace up! it won't do to show the white feather now."

He sat for some moments with his head resting on one of his great fat hands, thinking very hard and studying the coals that sputtered in the grate.

"Damn that Shrike!" bringing his hand down on the desk with a blow. "Whoever would have thought that he would round on me this way? Been playing with me all along like a cat with a mouse, and having enjoyed himself at that game, is ready to pounce on me any moment and chew me up. Yes, that's it; chew me up."

The rustling of the curtain startled him, and he closed the inside shutters.

"He's got me hard and fast, curse him!" he muttered, walking up and down the room; "right down under his feet, where he can stamp me out if he wants to; where I've got many a man, many a man;" and a sickly smile puckered up his tallowy cheeks.

Then he straightened himself up, and the light revived in his eyes.

"But I've been up so long that I can't get down in the dirt, and live like a dog again. I did when I was young. I'd do most anything rather than go back to that. Curse the luck! How did he get hold of that story? I might have died here in peace but for that damned, meddling scoundrel. What's to be done? I mustn't let him walk over. I mustn't; I won't. I've weathered too many tough storms to hunt a hole now. What's to be done?" seating himself again by the fire, and relapsing into thought.

For fully five minutes he sat there, with his eyes on the fire. An impatient exclamation from time to time broke from his lips, as his thoughts revealed the hopelessness of his situation, that he was hemmed in from all sides, that an impenetrable wall hid his future. The clock ticked merrily on the mantelpiece. The fire, flaming up in weird tongues of flame, covered the walls with strange shivering shadows.

"He must have Marcia," he muttered. "If she consents there will be no disgrace." His thoughts wandered off again. "But she won't consent—never! I saw that last night when I hinted that I should like him for a son-in-law. It roused the devil in her. She hates him. It blazed out of her eyes. That moment I couldn't help being proud of her. She was glorious!"

The clock ticked on. The heavy breathing of the man could be distinctly heard as he bent over the fire.

"The only way out of it is for her to sacrifice herself for my sake. She'd do it in a minute if I asked her." A light came into his eyes that softened the lines in his gross, sordid face, making his expression soft and gentle. "But shall I let her? Shall I let her ruin her life? and—and when she loves another—and that other the man—the man—" his words sank into a whisper and he moved uneasily.

"No, no," he cried fiercely, starting up; "she's young and bright, and all life is before her. I'm old and battered, and might drop out any time, and small loss it would be. She mustn't suffer for my crime, sacrifice herself for my sin. I'm a damned coward to think of such a thing. John, be a man for once in your life. You've done some dirty things in your time; wipe 'em out with one generous act." His face grew transfigured for a moment, and he drew himself up to his full height, as he walked firmly over to his desk.

"If I was out of the way," he whispered, with one hand on the knob of the upper drawer. "If I was out of the way," he repeatedly softly, "Shrike might do his worst and hurt nobody. She would be free to marry the man she loves, and I should be forgotten by Brent, if not forgiven."

With nervous hands he opened the drawer, as if in haste lest he should change his mind. A handsome pair of French duelling pistols lay before him. He took them out of the case and flung them on the table, the firelight flashing on the polished barrels.

"Stocks will be cheap to-morrow," he said, smiling grimly; "the big bull of the market will have gone to grass."

He stood looking at the pistols for some moments, and then began nervously and hastily to examine the charges. They seemed all right. How devilish the instruments of death looked, as the fire shining on the steel seemed to touch them with flame.

He cocked one pistol with a steady hand and pointed it towards his breast. His lips were drawn firmly together in that peculiar way his opponents in the business world understood to mean mischief and determination. He could count every tick of the clock as his thumb bore down on the trigger, but it seemed scarcely as loud as the beating of his own heart.

The hammer fell, but there was only a click. The cartridge did not go off. He flung it from him with a curse, and took up the other pistol. This cartridge he examined carefully. He was trembling now, the tension on his nerves had been so great. The loading was all right; there could be no mistake this time in its going off.

He was quivering as he pointed the muzzle towards his breast and fired, just as something struck his arm. The sound of the explosion in the closed room dazed him. He hardly knew what had taken place, except that he had been miraculously saved—that he was still alive.

A strange sense of gratitude welled up in the heart of the man who a few minutes ago had been eager to die. A love of living had returned to him. He thanked God in his heart. Marcia was crouching at his feet, sobbing. The sight of her revived all the bitter thoughts.

“What did you do it for, Marsh?” he gasped. “What did you do it for?” staring wild-eyed at his daughter’s face, as she kneeled at his feet, her dark hair falling on her white wrapper like a mantle. “Why didn’t ye let me go? You don’t know, Marsh, what pain it might have saved ye if that bullet had only found its mark.”

“What do you mean, papa? I don’t understand,” she said tremulously, raising her tear-stained face to his. “You don’t know what you are saying,” bursting again into tears.

“Yes, I do,” he replied huskily; “yes, I do, Marsh, and I ain’t liable never to forget it. I’ll tell ye what ye brought me back to life again for. It’s to rot my old bones away in a mouldy jail, with murderers and cut-throats and robbers—and—”

“Hush!” laying her hand on his mouth; “you are raving. Calm yourself—you are mad.”

“I wish I was—I wish I was; but it’s all God’s gospel, as I stand here a miserable wretch brought back from death. Sit here, Marsh,” lifting her into a chair. “I’ll tell ye why I wanted to end the game to-night, and would have if you had not turned up as you did.”

She looked at him wild-eyed, as if still doubtful of his sanity, but listened.

“Captain Shrike has been here to-night. We had a long

talk," he rattled on nervously. "Somewhere—somehow—I don't know—he has got hold of a secret—a secret that concerns me. I am in—I am in his grip. He can squeeze the life out of me whenever he wants to. He can make my name a disgrace in New York, in the country. He can ruin us both forever."

He covered his face with his hands. His breathing could be distinctly heard above the ticking of the clock.

Marcia sat staring at the wall as if carved out of stone. Once or twice she moved her lips as if to speak, but no words came. Finally she whispered:

"What was this—this crime of which you speak?"

"I took some money when I was a poor devil which did not belong to me. It was the capital out of which I made my fortune."

Her set lips moved: "We will give up every cent—we will go out of this house empty-handed, and leave every penny, beg, starve—"

He shook his head sadly, slowly: "It is not money that will buy his silence."

"What then?"

"You."

He looked at her wonderingly, curiously, a wistful expression in his eyes. Why did she not speak? The fixed glance frightened him. But for a slight shudder that she gave as he spoke, he might have imagined that she did not hear. The color had entirely left her face. With great mournful eyes riveted on the wall, and her long hair falling about her in disorder, she looked like the Christian maiden in the arena of the Roman Coliseum, awaiting the spring of the tiger that was to bring her death.

How long they sat there silent neither knew or cared. The clock ticked on, the fire smouldered and grew cold on the hearth. The gray light of morning filtered through the half-closed shutters and fell upon the girl's white face and quivering lips, and on the limp figure of the millionaire, a huddled heap by his desk. His face was buried in his hands; he seemed oblivious of her presence.

At last her eyes fell upon him as he sat there so full of de-

spair. She crept over to his side and laid one hand softly on the grief-bowed head.

"Papa," she murmured; "papa."

He did not stir.

She bent nearer and whispered in his ear:

"Papa, Captain Shrike shall be paid his price."

"Oh, Marsh!" he cried, starting to his feet and opening his arms wide; but she had glided away.

He turned back into the room again with faltering steps.

"Well—I—I—didn't ask her to do it," he tried to comfort himself by saying.

CHAPTER XVII.

BRENT'S NEW HOME.

THE first sign of returning consciousness that John Brent experienced was in dull pains that felt like a drill working slowly through his brain. Gradually the balls of fire that were floating before his eyes settled into a steady glare. He moved uneasily, and struck out blindly with one hand. Then he rubbed his eyes, that seemed full of burning heat, and looked wonderingly around him. What he saw was a dirty window, with one pane filled up with greasy tin, through which the noonday sun filtered feebly. The four walls were of a sickly green color, like the scum on a mill-pond, and they oozed moisture, and smelt damp and grave-like. A rat scurried across the floor as he raised his head, and regarded him for a moment critically with its sharp little eyes, before diving into its hole with a farewell squeak of surprise or wonder. There was no furniture in the room but an old soap-box that looked strangely out of place in such surroundings, and the bed on which he was lying. He noticed then that though the room was dingy, everything was clean about the bed, from the unbleached muslin sheets to the log-cabin quilt. Where Brent was he could not imagine, and his heavy brain refused to struggle with the problem. He felt bruised, as if he had been beaten with clubs; and all he cared to do was to lie on his back in a half-dozed and watch a great spider swinging on an aerial trapeze above his head. It was raining without, and the steady patter of the drops tinkling on the pane seemed to soothe him and quiet the throbs of his brain, the jumping pains that felt as if some one was cracking his skull with a hammer and cold chisel.

He was drifting off into another troubled sleep again, when he heard the sound of shuffling, slippered feet by the door. A preliminary cough announced that some one was coming.

"Are you all right?" asked a cheery voice; and a tousled

head, covered with yellow hair, was stuck grotesquely through the crack of the door.

"What, Joe Skerritt?" asked Brent, turning so quickly that he gave his bruised arm a painful wrench. "Is it really you, Joe?"

"Now, don't say a word," was the rejoinder. "Mother says you ain't to open your head until you has a cup of tea."

"Come in, I want to speak to you," noticing for the first time that he could only turn his head with difficulty.

"Must obey orders," growled Joe, slouching into the room in an embarrassed way, and taking a seat on the soap-box by the bed.

"Now, then, Joe; I want you to answer some questions."

"Yes, sir," working with a loose button on his coat and looking like a culprit. "But you hadn't ought to talk much, sir," with an air of mild protestation.

"I won't," said Brent. "Just tell me in as few words as possible what I am doing here, where I came from, and, in short, all you know."

"Well, there ain't much to tell, Mr. Brent. You—you see—I went out to find old man Bowker, who's been on a bender, and try and fetch the old chap home—an'—an' I got down by the docks where he hangs out when he's in liquor, an'—an' I seen you actin' kind o' strange on the end of one of them piers, an' I laid low behind a cotton-bale, and when you went all of a heap and came near tumblin' into the river, I hauled you home. You was took dreadful bad with the fever, and didn't know nobody, whisperin' and singin' and actin' most strange. I brought you here 'cause I didn't know what else to do."

"And what is here?"

"Well, this is Bolger's Court."

"And where you live?"

"Yes, sir. It ain't much of a place," apologetically—"that is, for the likes of you—but—"

"Joe," cried Brent, "you are an angel!"

"Oh, no, indeed I ain't," exclaimed the other.

"Yes, you are; don't contradict me. You took care of me when I was alone in the world, when I had no place to turn. I thought I didn't have a friend, but, by God, I believe you are worth the whole pack that I lost."

Joe blushed to the roots of his hair. "You—you mustn't excite yourself, sir; it might bring on the fever again, mother says."

"I won't, Joe, I won't. But just one question more: is this your room?"

"Ye-e-e-s," reluctantly.

"Just as I thought. And how long have I lain here?"

"Two weeks."

"Two weeks!" exclaimed Brent, and the words went echoing through his brain.

It was a long time to be away from the world. He wondered what new turn the wheel of fortune had taken in those fourteen days. Was she — ? But no, he did not want to think about her. He did not want to think at all. It made his head ache.

"Joe," he said, after a moment's silence; "Joe."

"Yes, sir."

"Now don't call me sir, or we shall quarrel. Call me Jack."

"Yes, sir," was the meek response.

"Did—did I say much when I was delirious—anything about what led me down to the pier that night?"

"Well," said Joe, twisting his hat in his hands nervously, and hesitating to speak, "you did certainly say a good deal, but it was mostly mixed up. Anyway," his face lighting up, "no one could have heard what you said but me—'cause—'cause I kept everybody away."

Brent's hand closed over Joe's red, pudgy fingers with a warm and hearty grasp. "But you must have known that—that I had no friends—that I had broken with them all."

"I knowed that you'd had some trouble with old Tillinghurst—that he'd been cuttin' up rough with you, and that —"

"We won't speak of that," said Brent sadly, as if he divined that Joe was going to say something about Marcia. He wanted to try and make believe that he had come on a visit to Bolger's Court, and that the events of the past had only been a part of his delirium.

"You can be sure," said Joe finally, as if he guessed what was running in the other's mind, "that whatever I did

hear while you was sick, it won't never go any further. I am a reg'lar oyster, I am, for knowin' how and when to shut up."

"It's a very good fault," said Brent, with a faint smile. "I'm sure I couldn't confide a secret into better keeping than to you, Joe. You are treating me a great deal better than I deserve."

"You were very kind to me at the mill, sir, very. We fellows that has to work for a livin' don't always forget favors. But there! I've been chatterin' away here, when mother told me to fetch you a cup of tea as soon as you'd woke up. I won't be a minute;" and he shuffled out of the room as noiselessly as the great flapping carpet slippers he wore would allow.

A mist came into Brent's eyes as he thought of this poor fellow's unselfish kindness. The few encouraging words he had said to Joe at the mills had borne golden fruit. He did not feel the misery of his position so keenly now since he had a friend, and a true one. A love of living returned to him. He had wanted to die that night when he knew that Marcia had forgotten him, but now that it was over he felt as if the fiery trials through which he had so lately passed had done him good. What had happened had sobered him down materially. He was not the gay, careless, vacillating young man about town who had given New York so much to talk about.

He made up his mind that for the present he would make his home with the Skerritts in Bolger's Court. Perhaps an opportunity would come when he might be able to return the kindness they had lavished on him during his long illness. He remembered then that he had some money in his pocket on that day of disaster, some bills he had drawn out of the bank to buy—yes, to buy an engagement ring. There was another ring on that finger now, he thought sadly. He did not want to think about Marcia at all; but it was not so easy to blot out memories that were burnt into his very nature. He heard her voice in the tinkle of the rain on the glass, and the rustle of her dress in the whispers of the wind. Looking around the room again, he saw that the suit of clothes he had worn on that eventful day was piled up at the foot of the bed, carefully brushed and folded. Near them was a shirt, glossy with starch, done up in Mrs. Skerritt's best style. It seemed

to Brent that wherever his eye turned he found some fresh traces of the kindness of this poor family, and his heart swelled with gratitude.

He found his money all safe in the watch-pocket where he had stowed it away. It gave him new courage to feel the crisp bank-notes in his hands, for now he might indirectly be able to repay the Skerritts for their kindness. He saw that there was enough money for him to live upon for several months to come, and then, if the worst came, he could fall back on his watch and diamond studs. Altogether he was not so badly off. His condition of mental misery was not so painful as he had imagined it would be under the circumstances. He was young and of a naturally buoyant temperament, and if he could only get some work, and hard work, he argued to himself, he could in time live down the old life, and perhaps forget that it had ever existed. His head was still spinning, but a nervous impulse made him get up and dress. Joe, entering noiselessly with a cup of tea and a toasted bun in his hand, was surprised to see his patient climbing into his trousers.

"Say, this is against orders, ye know," he said, with a mild look of remonstrance. "You wasn't to get up for a week yet," laying the breakfast down on the soap-box.

"Oh, pshaw, Joe; I'm all right," exclaimed Brent cheerfully; "a little stiff in the joints; that's all. Perhaps you can lend me a razor to get rid of this beard," rubbing with nervous fingers the stubby growth of hair that had accumulated during his illness.

Joe was off in a minute to get the required article, and handed it to Brent with a doubtful expression on his face.

"I don't know as I can recommend it, sir. I lent it to old man Bowker the other day, and it's my opinion he used it to open oysters with. You might try the heel; that's the only place that don't seem to be all nicked up."

"Oh, I dare say it will do very well," said Brent cheerfully, lathering himself with a liberal hand, while Joe helped him by holding the cup.

He saw by the broken mirror between the windows, as he shaved, that his face had strangely altered since his illness, and looked pale and haggard. It seemed as if he had added

fully ten years to his life since the night Joe had found him on the pier.

"What are you doing now, Joe?" he asked, as he finished the painful duty, and sat down on the edge of the bed and began to devour the frugal breakfast greedily. "I suppose the mills are still closed, and the strike continues, eh?"

"Yes, sir, we're still out," said Joe, with a sigh. "And from the looks of things about town, there don't seem to be any chance of the mills startin' up again. The weeks you've been sick, sir, has been terrible ones for workin' folks. Almost every factory's closed, and the streets is jest full of people out of jobs. I guess we ain't seen the worst of these strikes yet. So many idlers ain't going to starve in a rich city like this without kickin' up a row. They goes prowlin' around like a lot o' tigers, some of them foreigners, as if they'd like to eat somebody raw, with a slice of lemon."

"I hope you haven't mixed yourself up in any of these labor troubles, Joe?"

"Well, I has to stand by the Brotherhood, of course, 'cause I belong to it. It's the third week now since we left the mills," with another sigh.

"And how have you managed to live all that time?" asked Brent, with his mouth full of bread and tea.

"Oh, we had a few dollars saved up—we—"

"Who's we?"

"Why, Malvina and me. I had a little money laid by to get furniture with when we were married, but that's all going; slow but sure."

"Why, don't the Brotherhood provide for you after ordering the strike?" asked Brent, in amazement.

"They did at first, but I've only had two dollars from the treasurer this week. Ye see, there is so many strikes going on about town and in the neighborhood that there ain't enough money to go around. I'm a good bit better off than the married men, though. I don't see how they stand it nohow."

"It must be hard all around," said Brent. "But don't you get discouraged, Joe. If I ever get on my feet again, I'll see that you don't suffer," laying his hand kindly on the other's shoulder.

"Now, don't," said Joe, almost ready to blubber. "We ain't done anything at all for you to make such a fuss about. I'm downright glad to see you here in the house, though wishin' the 'commodations was better."

"They are much better than I deserve, I dare say," said Brent seriously. "And now, Joe," he cried cheerfully, "that I have slept and eaten and arranged my toilet, take me to see your excellent mother that I may thank her for her kindness."

"I'll let you see her," said Joe with a laugh; "but you don't want to thank her, She don't like it—says it frustrates her."

Brent promising that he would not, young Mr. Skerritt piloted him through the tortuous passage-ways of Bolger's Court to a neighboring room, where Mrs. Skerritt was found, as usual, half-way into a wash-tub, surrounded by an incongruous assortment of remarkable underclothes, stretched on lines across the room. She was surprised to see him out of bed so soon, but when she had dried her hands, she gave him a hearty welcome, and he felt more at home than he had since he came to New York. He was glad indeed that his lines had fallen in such pleasant places, as they fixed up an arm-chair for him out of reach of the flying suds, where he could toast himself by the fire and look out on the street. It was pleasant for him to sit there and rest, in that homely room, with the old woman's quaint speeches to break in on his thoughts when they threatened to become disagreeable, and Joe's kindly face beaming upon him through the row of flaming red shirts, like a benignant blonde cherub.

The spirit of home thrived in that air, misty with suds and redolent of brown soap. There was a soothing song in the gurgle of the teapot on the hob, and a whole eloquent address of welcome in the crackling logs in the old brick fire-place.

A great peace seemed to fill John Brent's mind as he sat there, such as he had not known in all the months of bustle and excitement and dissipation, when he had passed from one pleasure to another in a vain search for the waters of happiness.

For the present he made up his mind that he could not do better than live with the Skerritts, and indirectly he thought

he might be able to make them some return for all their trouble. He knew, the first time that he saw Mrs. Skerritt's broad, homely face, that to offer her money would be an insult; but he argued that he could do much by strategy for their comfort. He spoke to Joe about staying at Bolger's Court.

"Just what I was hoping you'd do, on'y I didn't dare suggest it," was that young man's reply. "There's just the room you want, near mine. Feller that used to live in it was a switchman on the Elevated, and got run over." Cheerfully, "It's one of the driest rooms in the house; you can get it for a dollar and a half a week, and eat your meals with us if you think you can stand mother's cooking."

Brent had a look at the room, and found it light and dry. Mrs. Skerritt consented to buy him a bed and stove and some few pieces of furniture at the second-hand dealer's on the corner, that afternoon; so he lost no time in clinching the bargain. At Joe's suggestion, he bought a common suit of working clothes, for a diagonal cutaway and tweed trousers looked rather out of place in Bolger's Court. He wondered, when he put on his new suit, if his friends would be able to recognize, in the slim-looking man in overalls and blue-plaid jumper and flannel shirt, the debonair and graceful leader of the german, John Brent.

He supped that evening with the family. Malvina, who had dropped in to tea, was rather disconcerted at his presence, which she illustrated by blushing furiously every time he looked at her; and she came several times near choking when his foot happened to touch hers by mistake under the table.

The *menu* was not elaborate, but Brent was surprised at the partiality he evinced for such homely fare as bread and tea and baked beans. As for the conversation, it was principally on the subject of strikes; but he felt at home and at ease, and after a pipe with Joe, he retired to his new room, encouraged in spirit, and feeling a new hope in his heart, a new strength for the struggle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARCIA HEARS SOME BAD NEWS.

Mr. JOHN TILLINGHURST was in an excellent mood that afternoon, as he tapped lightly on the door of his daughter's room with a neatly-gloved hand. He was dressed more sprucely than usual, with a clove pink in his button-hole, and he swung a youthful-looking cane back and forth, as he stood impatiently on the threshold.

"Marcia," he called, as his knock was not answered.

"Come in," said a voice faintly.

He walked in with a quick stride, and then paused in the middle of the room and looked at his daughter curiously. "Come—come, what does this mean? Why, you haven't begun to dress yet, and it's half-past four," taking out his watch and snapping it with an angry click.

"I am not going," said Marcia, looking up at him as she lay extended on the sofa, her head resting on one arm.

"How's that?" asked Mr. Tillinghurst, tapping his boots impatiently with his cane, though he heard perfectly well.

"I said I was not going," she repeated, slowly.

"But, Marcia, you—you must come; think what a predicament you put Captain Shrike in. Here's his cousin, Mrs. Townsend, has given this reception, and asked people to meet you. Don't—don't make a fool of me too."

She did not seem to hear what he was saying, and he regarded her wonderingly.

"Come, Marcia, now do this to please me. You ain't like most girls. You can dress in ten minutes if you want to. I don't ask you for a favor very often."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, and he cowered. His mind went back to that scene one morning in his study.

"You can easily beg me off, papa," she said wearily, after neither of them had spoken for several minutes. "If Captain Shrike chooses to make engagements for me, he cannot expect

me to keep them. I don't feel like going—my head aches horribly."

"But it will only be for an hour or so," he pleaded.

"I cannot help it, papa; I cannot help it," she cried, covering her face with her hands. "Oh, tell them anything you please. Can't you see that I am miserable, that I can hardly hold my head up;" and she burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping that shook her body spasmodically, as she swayed to and fro with her face buried in her hands.

In his clumsy way, Mr. Tillinghurst felt sorry for her, and pitied her tears. He put down his cane, and came nearer to her, and laid his great red hand gently on her shoulder.

"Why will you think of him, Marsh?" he asked. "He wasn't worth a thought. Do you think if he had cared so much about ye he would have sneaked away as he did, with never a word to no one, and without saying good-bye even. I hate to see you waste a thought on him."

"How do you know he did not say good-bye to me before he went away?" she demanded, raising her tear-stained face defiantly towards him. "How do you know?"

Tillinghurst turned his head away; he saw he had made a mistake. "Well—well," he stammered, "of course, I had no way of finding out for certain; but—but then you never said anything about his calling, and so—and so—I of course imagined—imagined that he had not done so," turning his hat around in his hands nervously, and looking like a school-boy who was going to recite. "You saw him, then?" he asked, looking at her out of the corner of his eye.

"No," she said, slowly and distinctly. "You had trained your servant too well for that. Now don't add a lie to what you have done," as he was about to speak. "John told me all about it before he went away—that he was paid to tell Mr. Brent that I was out when he came in answer to my appointment. You see, you made a mistake in discharging a servant who had been so faithful in aiding your schemes."

"Well, really, Marcia, I'm sure I only did it for the best. Don't be too hard on me if I tried to break up all meetin's between you and Brent. You may live to thank me for it; indeed, you may;" and emboldened by the listless attention

she gave to his words, he came a little nearer, but did not dare look her straight in the face.

"You need not be afraid," she said coldly; "I shall not try to shirk my part of the contract. The marriage shall take place," drawing her lips tightly together.

"Thank you, Marsh, thank you," he murmured, brokenly.

"You might have spared me the disgrace," she added, "of planning with your servants to deceive me."

"But you don't know," he moaned, cowering down by the side of the sofa, "how much, how very much depends on this. I am an old man, Marsh; a very old man; and I'm fighting hard to make my last years of life years of peace."

"You can never earn peace by such methods as you have chosen. I have given you my word," as the tears welled up in her eyes again; "you know I won't break it."

"Yes, I know, I know," trying to find her hand.

She raised him gently, almost tenderly. How old he looked, she thought, as she led him across the room.

"Papa," she said, as they stood in the doorway, "you can trust me, can you not?" He nodded slowly, almost sadly. "I pity you from the bottom of my heart, but don't—don't let me despise you."

He could not find a word to say as he stood there. She had glided into the room again, and closed the door. He thought he heard sounds of sobbing, but he may have been mistaken.

He struck his hand on the balustrade sharply, "By God, I'm not fit to have a daughter like that!" he exclaimed, as he groped his way down the dimly lighted stairs and into the street.

Marcia was crying, crying as if her heart would break. It was more for shame that her father should stoop to plot with his servants to watch her movements that caused the tears to flow. It seemed as if gradually she was losing respect for her father; yet knowing how fearful he was lest his crime should be discovered, she could not help pitying him.

She felt better after she had cried away the long pent-up tears. After all, it was a pleasure to her to have discovered that Brent had made an effort to see her, that she need no longer do him the injustice to think that he had sneaked out of sight without a word.

But what had become of him? How had he disappeared? She could not ask Shrike, for though they were engaged to be married, she tried to see as little of him as possible. It worried her that every one in society kept asking the question over and over again.

"Oh, do tell us, Miss Tillinghurst, what has become of that delightful Mr. Brent?"

It brought the tears to her eyes to be constantly harried by this question that she could not answer. She was not enough of a society woman to be an adroit liar, so that she could only stammer out that she had not seen him in several weeks, but believed that he had gone West to look after his property there.

How she wished in her heart that she knew where he really was, if only to be able to stave off the inquiring minds who pretended to be interested in his welfare.

Lots of unpleasant stories were floating around about the young man, industriously circulated by the ladies who had in vain courted his attention, seconded by those glib-tongued, insidious matrons whose charms he had been cold to. The most credited story was that he had embezzled the funds of the Empire Mills, and had escaped to Canada with his plunder, and that noble-minded Mr. Tillinghurst had refused to prosecute.

And Marcia had the shame of seeing that her father never denied this infamous lie, but looked mysterious, as if he knew a great deal more about the matter than he cared to tell, and wagged his head solemnly, as if he regretted the young man's perfidy. Spiteful little paragraphs began to appear in the society papers about Brent's disappearance—hints that the editors of these sapient sheets had known all along that he was a humbug; that even now he was the co-respondent in a peculiarly scandalous St. Louis divorce suit; and that, if the truth were known, he had not acted like a St. Anthony with some of New York's fashionable favorites.

So the slanders ran like prairie fire, across the city, and Marcia read every paragraph, and cried over them, and succeeded in getting herself into that miserable condition that is only possible to a girl who has given all the love of her heart into one man's keeping.

After her fit of crying on that day, Marcia did a very queer thing. After bathing her burning eyes in cold water, she dressed herself in the modest little black alpaca dress that she usually wore on her tenement-house visits, and, heavily veiled, crept stealthily down the servants' stairway, and so out through the side-door that led to Forty-first Street. Then she crossed to Third Avenue and rode up-town to Fiftieth Street, where she got out and walked briskly towards the east side. The lights were beginning to bloom out in the gin-mills, and a man spoke to her as she crossed Second Avenue, but she did not turn back, only hastening her footsteps as she neared Beekman Place.

She had never been in this part of the city before, but she had often heard the little club-house described in a jocular way by Captain Shrike, and knew it at once by the Venetian blinds on the windows and the castile-soap-looking horse-block in front of the door.

What if she should meet Shrike there, she asked herself in fear. Then she looked at her watch, and saw that it was after five, and that he was probably on his way to some dinner-party, and that she need not be alarmed.

She drew her veil closer over her face as she stood in front of the club-house door. How wildly her heart beat as she rang the bell! Her mind was full of strange fancies conjured up by the sight of the house where he had lived. What if he were inside—ill—dying—

Her imaginative flights were cut short by the door opening. A hard-featured woman in a neat black gown eyed her curiously.

"Well, mum, and what do you want?"

"I—I wanted to ask," trembled Marcia, somewhat awed by the stony glare of this female Cerebus, "if there is a gentleman by the name of Brent stopping here?"

The woman looked her over again, and then burst into a loud laugh.

"So ye're one o' them?" she said, chuckling in her throat. "Well, Mr. Brent's went away. He ain't been here for ten days or more."

"And do you know where he has gone?" asked Marcia.

"I hears," said the woman, looking about mysteriously,

“that he’s went to California to get married. That is, I’ve been told so.”

The door swung to with a clang. Marcia was alone on the steps. Married! The word rang like a dull pain through her brain; she leaned heavily on the railing for support; the street grew misty before her eyes. What had that horrible woman meant when she said, “So you are one of them?” Her heart grew sick at the painful thoughts that surged through her brain. Oh, it was infamous.

She turned away with faltering steps, only anxious how to get away from that hateful neighborhood, and regretting, oh, so bitterly, that she had ever come.

Her father might have been right after all, when he said that Brent was not worth wasting a thought upon. There had always been some mystery about him that she had wondered at, an unaccountable uneasiness when he spoke of his antecedents. He had probably been thinking of that woman in California, and was afraid lest his secret should be found out.

The tears rushed to Marcia’s eyes, as she thought how she had been deceived in him, and she crept home like a culprit and hid herself in her room, where she wept away her sorrows on the pillow, and tried to shut out of her heart the memory of the man who had grown so dear to her.

Had Marcia been able to look through the oaken door of the club-house in Beekman Place, as she was leaving, she would have heard Captain Shrike say to the hard-featured woman:

“Bravo, Mrs. Clinch! that California yarn of yours ought to do the business.”

CHAPTER XIX.

A MYSTERIOUS VISIT.

"Miss TILLINGHURST," said a timid voice as she was hurrying down Fifth Avenue the next morning, "Miss Tillinghurst!"

"What, Joe Skerritt?" as the well-knit figure came bounding towards her with giant strides. "Nothing serious in the Court, is there, Joe?" mistaking his embarrassed air for bad news. "Malvina and your mother are well, I hope?"

"Oh, they're well enough," said Joe uneasily; "I—I had something else to tell you, Miss Tillinghurst, but I didn't know exactly where to begin. You ain't ashamed to be seen walking in the street with me?" he asked, looking doubtfully at her trim tweed ulster and then at his own faded corkscrew suit, that bore the stamp of a misfit parlor.

She laughed heartily. "You ought to know me better than that, Joe. I hope I shall always have as honest and upright a young man to take a walk with me as you."

Joe blushed to the roots of his yellow hair, and seemed to fancy the compliment highly.

"If you are afraid," she added, "of stirring gossip among fashionable friends, we will go down Park Avenue;" and suiting the words with the action, she turned down Fortieth Street, while Joe paddled along meekly by her side, looking as if he would have liked to run away, but did not dare to.

"I thought you had something to tell," said Marcia, after they had walked some blocks, and the young man showed no sign of breaking the silence.

"Well, I—I did, Miss," stammered Joe; "but I didn't know exactly how to begin. I'm puzzled whether I ought to say anything at all, for it ain't really any business of mine. In fact, it ain't in my line at all."

Miss Tillinghurst looked at him curiously.

"Well, Joe, whatever it is, out with it. I am quite sure it

must be something important, or you would not be so mysterious. Would I be interested?"

"You'd ought to be," he nodded.

"Something about Mr. Brent," she cried impulsively, laying her hand on his arm.

He nodded again. Her face was so eager that he knew he might go on with his story.

"Mr. Brent has been livin' with us down to the Court there, ten days or more."

A sigh of relief came from Marcia's lips. "And he is all safe and well?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, he's safe enough," returned Joe; "you leave it to mother to take care of him; but he's been powerful sick. Had a terrible fever, and we did think he'd never get rid of it."

A mist came into Marcia's eyes as she thought of him. A sense of shame came over her, as if she had been responsible for his illness. "And how—how did he come to you, Joe?" she faltered.

"It's a long story, Miss; would you care to hear it?"

"Very much."

"I found him down on the docks one rainy night, actin' strange like. I thought at first he'd took too much wine for his head, but it wa'n't that. He seemed most daft about something."

She turned her head away, lest he should see her tell-tale face.

"I was afraid he wanted to jump into the river, and was goin' to speak to him, when he fell all of a heap in a dead faint."

"And then?"

"And then I gave a man a quarter to help me carry him to the Court, which wasn't very far off, and there he has been ever since."

"And you tell me he is perfectly well now?"

"Well, he was much better when I left him. Ye see, Miss, he would get up 'fore we wanted him to, an'—an' that brought on a relapse. He's a bit delirious, but he's in a fair way to mend."

They walked on for some moments in silence, Marcia too much occupied with her own troubled thoughts to say much.

"Joe," she said at length, "I want you to do me a great

favor. I know you will—you have been so kind to tell me this. Now, do one thing more.”

“You’ve only got to ask, Miss, if I can do it.”

“Well, I want you to let me see him.”

“You see him?”

“Yes, and without anyone knowing of it, even your mother. Do you think he would know me?”

Joe shook his head. “He don’t even know me. But I don’t know whether it could be managed or not, slippin’ you into the Court.”

“But they are used to seeing me there, and no one would know what I came for.”

“I don’t know that myself,” said Joe bluntly. “Well, it ain’t much that either you or Mr. Brent could ask o’ me or mine that I wouldn’t try to do, Miss Marcia. And I’ll help you all I can. Mother’s out washin’ for a lady to-day, so I guess there’ll be nobody around.”

“I knew you would help me,” she said, giving Joe so grateful a look that the honest fellow blushed with pleasure. “But, remember, you must tell no one of this visit.”

“Not even Mr. Brent?”

“Not even Mr. Brent.”

Joe nodded silently, and they resumed their walk across Union Square. Here Marcia asked him to get a *coupé*, and into the vehicle they bundled, and were soon rattling over the pavement in the direction of Bolger’s Court, Joe enjoying the ride so much that he was sorry when the familiar old rookery came in sight.

“You stay in the carriage, Miss Tillinghurst, while I run up-stairs and see if everything is all right,” he whispered, as the carriage drew up to the side-walk, to the wonder and great delight of some dirty children, who were rolling in the mud like lively young turtles.

Marcia had not long to wait before Joe returned. He was not used to managing mysterious interviews, and the novelty of the thing rather amused him, though he would never have made a success as an intriguing conspirator.

“I don’t see a soul about,” he said. “There’s a few old parties sunnin’ of ther’selves in the yard, but they are all pen-

sioners of yours, and it won't matter if ye do run across them."

He piloted her in silence up the treacherous stairs, the mysteries of which she had never been able to solve, though she had been up and down them so often.

A voice was growling out a song from the landing above in a hoarse, beery voice,

"Oh, I love my love in the morning,
An' I love my love all day."

The song broke down with an oath, as the singer tripped over something.

"It's old man Bowker," said Joe; "he's been on a bender, and this is his last day. It always takes him a week to get over one—he made it two weeks when his wife died. If you'll come this way, we won't come near him," leading her through a side passage in the mouldy old honeycomb.

Marcia, who remembered her last meeting with old man Bowker, was only too glad to avoid seeing him.

"Oh, I love my love in the morning,
I love my love all day."

And then the husky voice ceased, and the sound of maudlin weeping sounded along the passage.

"This is the room," said Joe, softly. "I'll take a peep in and see if things is all right."

He disappeared inside, leaving Marcia on the threshold with a strangely beating heart. There were only a few boards between her and the man she loved, the man whom she had caused to suffer so. What must he think of her, she moaned, and only yesterday she had been willing to believe that he had given his love to another. What had she ever done that so much sorrow should be thrust upon her? What sin of omission, that she should be called to sacrifice her youth, her life, and suffer a martyrdom of shame?

She was all a-tremble with painful emotions when Joe tiptoed out of the room, with one finger on his lips.

"He's sleepin'," he whispered; "I wouldn't wake him, for it might make him worse and excite him."

Marcia pushed by him without an answer. Joe was forgot-

ten. Through the open door she had caught sight of a white face and a mop of tousled curls above the gaudy patchwork quilt by the greasy-looking window.

Five minutes—ten minutes—fifteen minutes passed, while Joe stood in the passage guarding the door.

When Marcia did come out, Joe saw she had been crying. He pitied her in his heart, though he could find no words to comfort her.

"Joe," she said earnestly, as they made their way slowly down the gloomy corridor, "do all you can for him, for my sake."

"I don't have to be asked to do that," he said bluntly.

"I—I only wish it were possible for me to be near him, as you are, Joe," she faltered. "You could not understand were I to tell you why it is I can't be here at his side."

He looked at her misty eyes and trembling lips.

"I know, Miss Marcia. Let's hope it'll be all right in the end. I'm sure no one could blame you. I used to think, when you came down here to see mother, that you were so high up in the world that you couldn't feel—that you couldn't love like poor folks; but your heart's pretty much in the same place as ours after all."

He wanted to sympathize with her so much, but the words came awkwardly to his lips. He could face Malvina's glances unflinchingly, but somehow Miss Tillingham's great, mournful eyes disconcerted him.

"Will you come again?" he asked.

"If I could," she murmured; "if I only could," so sadly that he looked at her hard. To her it seemed the last time that she should ever see John Brent. Their paths now lay a different way.

"Well, if you can come again," said Joe, half suspecting what was running in her mind, "if you can come, why I'll fix things for you."

She pressed his hand gratefully as he helped her into the carriage, too sad to make any rejoinder. Joe watched it roll away with a thoughtful expression on his freckled face.

"The need of money ain't the wust thing, after all," he said, as he turned on his heel. "Here, she's got everything but the man she wants. I guess Malvina and me needn't kick."

Brent was awake when he came back, and seemed to be much better, for he recognized Joe and was free from delirium, though the fever still burned in his face.

"I am glad to see you better, sir," said Joe, cracking some ice for his patient. "I dare say we will have you out in a few days."

"I've been delirious again, Joe?"

"Well, yes, sir, you've been a bit out of your head. But how did you know it?"

"Because it seemed to me, I half remember that in my sleep I woke up and saw a woman kneeling here by the side of my bed, and then—and then she cried," and he looked at the gay coverlet as if to see if there were traces of tears. "And then she cried," repeated the sick man in a dazed sort of way. "And then—" hesitating.

"And then?" asked the other.

"And then she leaned over me and kissed me."

"Well, now, what a beautiful dream!" said Joe, pounding the ice with a great deal of noise. "You'd ought to go to sleep, sir, an'—an' try to dream it all over again."

CHAPTER XX.

A BIT OF SOCIAL NEWS.

LIFE in Bolger's Court was not without variety. John Brent spent the days of his convalescence in studying his neighbors. The window of his room looked out on the court-yard, with its fountain and dirty children, and its slatternly women going and coming with pitchers of water all day.

They began chattering at an early hour and kept it up until dusk. Then the pitchers had another mission to fulfil. Most of them found their way into McGrogan's on the corner, where they were filled up to the brim with beer or ale; and many a shock-haired little messenger stopped to take a sly sip on the way home with his precious burden. After Bolger's Court had been supplied with liquids, the trouble began. Residents who had spent many years in the dingy building knew the meaning of those peculiar sounds that broke discordantly on the silent night.

Certain yells denoted that old man Bowker had come home drunk, and was quarrelling with himself in the passage-way; still others, followed by blows, told the story to the inmates that Mrs. Porter was being beaten by her lord and master.

It was generally three o'clock in the morning before the sounds died away, and at five the Court was again ready for business, and the bustle and noise were resumed.

Yet Brent was satisfied with his life, though he had hardly been further than the corner since he came to live with the Skerritts. It was so different from the existence he had been leading that the novelty of his situation pleased him. All his ambitions seemed to have gone from him. He did not care to mix with the world again, or its people, who, he thought, had treated him so badly. He felt as if he could end his days in Bolger's Court without a pang for the luxuries he had lost, if time would only allow him to forget. Ah! there was the rub

—if he could only forget! Idleness gave him so much time to think, and then his thoughts would all run one way—of her.

The weeks went by and brought many changes to the Skerritt household. The strikers still held out, and their ranks were daily augmented by new recruits. The whole city was in an uproar, and capitalists trembled for their property. The manufactories were closed in and around the city, and the labor organizations of the country had turned into the district assemblies over a million in money. But this million was not like the miraculous loaves and fishes, it could feed only so many; and provisions had never been so high as at the present moment.

Joe Skerritt received only a dollar a week now from the district treasurer, and he saw the savings he had scraped together by hard toil melt away. It would be a long time now before he should be able to marry Malvina, but he was as cheerful as ever at home.

Brent, who had still considerable money left, from a Bolger's Court point of view, found many opportunities of helping the worthy people who had so unselfishly befriended him. A shawl that Mrs. Skerritt needed, a delicacy for the table, like tripe and onions, of which Joe was passionately fond, a ribbon for Malvina—in these simple ways he could easily give them pleasure; and seldom were people more appreciative.

Yet often, as Brent watched Joe and Malvina together, he lumbering and ungraceful in his attempts to play the lover, she blushing and embarrassed under the fire of his glances, a thought came over him as he stealthily watched them, a thought of the dream he had come near realizing. The sight of these two always set his mind wandering back to that world he had lost, to that woman he wanted to forget.

Queer, indeed, were many of the characters that found shelter in that mouldy tenement. The ranks of its lodgers were recruited from every branch of life. The odds-and-ends of society had found their way into Bolger's Court, and Brent found food for thought in studying them and their peculiarities. Old man Bowker he could not exactly make out. There was something pathetic and yet repellent about the miserable old gray-head. He might discuss the tariff question with you in the morning, and howl ribald songs and swear all the after-

noon. There was no placing any dependence on Bowker's movements, and for that reason he never kept a place. How he managed to keep his miserable old body out of the grave so long, nobody could tell; for when interrogated on the subject of his business, he would say he was a speculator on Wall Street, or turn off the question with some jest. It was evident that he had a mysterious income of a few dollars a week from some unknown source. Sober, he was an interesting though not cultivated man to talk to, Brent found. Drunk, a fiend of hell could not blaspheme so or exhibit such passions incarnate. Even the inmates of Bolger's Court bolted their doors with extra precaution the nights when Bowker was "on a bender."

It was six o'clock on a certain April evening that the Skerritt family, including John Brent, sat down at the table to discuss a ham bone and bread and tea. Joe was the only one in the group who seemed at all disposed to talk, and talk he would, in spite of the huge cubes of bread that passed in under his moustache at regular intervals.

"Wot's the news, Joe?" asked Mrs. Skerritt, passing him a cup of tea. "Is it so the shoemakers gave the police a hot time last night?"

"Yes; an' I on'y wish I'd been there, that's all," said Joe. "I'm never on hand for a good time, anyway. You see the men was hangin' around the factory rather late at night, and the perlice thought they were goin' to set fire to it, and tried to drive 'em away. I hear three of the cops got their heads broke in the scrap what followed."

"Oh, ain't that just awful," piped Malvina, who had a feeling heart.

"Naw, serve 'em right. Nice workin'-gal you are, Malvina, sidin' with the enemies of labor. I'm ashamed of ye; there now!"

"Well, they should ought to behave theirselves, them shoemakers," added his *fiancée* stoutly.

"Now, what do you women know about the rights of labor?"

"We knows that all we gets out of them 'ere strikes is mostly starvation," said Mrs. Skerritt bluntly, wiping a plate vigorously with a napkin. "I never knew nothin' good to come of 'em, anyway."

"But ain't a feller's manhood got anything to do with it? Do

you want to see your own flesh and blood," with a sweep of the arm that upset the pickle jar, "ground down beneath the victorious hoofs of a degraded aristocracy?" asked Joe.

"Bravo!" said Brent, knocking on the table. "Why, Joe, I did not know that you were such an orator."

"Well, them words is not exactly mine, sir," said Joe, half apologetically; "I heard em last week at the meeting of the Reconstructionists—at Hoskins."

"The Reconstructionists?" asked the other; "why, I thought you belonged to the regular Brotherhood of Labor?"

"Well, I do—I thought I would try this other s'ciety on the quiet, to see what they was up to. They's mostly made up o' Socialists and sech. Lively times they have too at their meetin's, particularly when the Rooshians gets up full of beer—they goes in for harsh measures towards the aristocracy; wants to fire their houses, and so on."

"Better keep out o' such company, Joe," said his mother, while Malvina cast a reproving glance.

"Oh, it don't hurt me none," said the young man cheerfully. "They don't get Josie into any such scrape—not—much."

A timid tap at the door, and Mr. Bowker stood among them. "I beg pardon for intruding," he said, half apologetically; "I was going up-town, and I thought Joe might want to go along to the meeting. I'll wait outside."

"No, you won't," said Joe, with polite rudeness. "Sit down and have a cup of tea," pushing Bowker into a chair that Mrs. Skerritt had already dusted preparatory to his occupying it.

"How's Wall Street?" asked Joe; for it was a joke with him to say that whenever he met Mr. Bowker.

"I can say without any exaggeration," with a grim smile, "that Wall Street is pretty nigh dead, Joe. There's nobody buyin' stocks, and everyone wants to sell. What do you think of Western Union down to sixteen?"

"I should say it meant ruin for somebody," said Brent, looking up. "Where is this trouble going to end? It will wreck the city."

"Let her go," said Bowker cheerfully. "I could sit on the Tribune tower and fiddle like a second Nero, while she burnt; yes, and while some of the people in the city sizzled," he

exclaimed, vehemently, while Malvina stared at him with wild eyes, and let fall an "Oh!"

"Why, you do really give a body the shivers, Mr. Bowker," said Mrs. Skerritt, holding up her hands. "However can you be so bloodthirsty, when you might die to-night with sech words on your lips?"

"No, I ain't goin' to die jest yet awhile," said the old man, firmly; "I ain't quite through, I ain't."

"You seem to know all about it," said Mrs. Skerritt; "I suppose you've got the day down fine when ye're goin' to die," sarcastically.

"After I square matters, then I'm ready to croak, but—but not before;" and he turned around and looked out thoughtfully on the street, now full of dusky shadows.

The Skerritt family looked at each other knowingly, but said nothing. Mrs. Skerritt shook her head and heaved a sigh of great volume. It was evident to her mind that the old man was not quite right in his head.

"You're not goin' to one o' them meetin's, are you, Joe?" she asked a little anxiously, as her only hopeful gulped down the rest of his tea and picked up his hat.

"Well, I was thinkin' of goin' with Mr. Bowker," Joe said, a little sheepishly. "I won't be gone long," in response to Malvina's reproachful glances. "It stirs a feller up to hear them speakers."

"Yes, stirs up all the deviltry in ye," said his mother, bluntly, as she prepared to wash the dishes.

"I'm sorry you're not in sympathy with the cause, Mrs. Skerritt," said old man Bowker, turning around.

"The cause, I find, is generally rum," was the grim response.

This rather floored Mr. Bowker, but he only said: "Well, if I had a son, and such a likely lad as Joe, I'd be mighty glad if he'd interest himself in the down-trodden and oppressed, and in the upholding of the rights of man."

"Bosh!" said the sturdy matron; "they can't uphold themselves without the aid of a lamp-post when they comes home from them agitatin' meetings. I wish there wasn't no workin'-men's s'cieties in New York, I do," said Mrs. Skerritt, as

she threw the ham-bone at the cat, who happened to be passing at that moment.

Mr. Bowker sighed as he rose, and shook his head: "Perhaps you wouldn't mind going along too, Mr. Brent?"

That young man looked up from the piece of yesterday's paper he had been reading, and shook his head.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Bowker, I should be out of place among the hard workers. I am an idler, you know, though it is more from necessity than from anything else."

"You're a victim, rather, of aristocratic tyranny," for Mr. Bowker knew most of his story; "and your place ought to be in our ranks. Yer heart's a working-man's, if ye do look like you'd rolled out of Murray Hill. Come around and be stirred up, as Joe says."

"Yes, come," said young Mr. Skerritt, who had evidently won Malvina over to his side in the interval, for she said nothing about his going.

Brent started up suddenly, as if a new thought had struck him, something that excited his mind. "Certainly I'll go, certainly," he exclaimed, rising hastily from the table and looking about for his hat. "As you were saying, my place is in the ranks of the Reconstructionists."

Had the Skerritt family been curious, they might have wondered at the sudden change in their lodger, who seemed all eagerness now to join Mr. Bowker and Joe. They were too simple-minded to imagine that the piece of old newspaper was in any way connected with his new decision. Yet a paragraph in that greasy sheet had stirred up a host of memories. It was these words in the society column that had caused John Brent his sudden change of mind:

"The troubled condition of the city does not appall the stout heart of Mr. John Tillingham, the eminent financier. We learn that he is to give a ball on the twenty-first of this month, at his residence on the corner of Forty-first Street and Fifth Avenue, that will surpass even the glories of the old Vanderbilt *fête*. It is given in honor of the approaching marriage of his daughter, Miss Marcia Tillingham, to Captain Rivington Shrike, the well-known member of the Argentine Club and Captain of the First New York Hussars."

CHAPTER XXI.

BEFORE THE BALL.

A GRAY sky, changed into rain, was what Marcia Tillinghurst looked out at, on the morning of the 21st of April. Spiteful gusts of wind rattled the window-shutters, moaned at the corners of the street, and hurried pedestrians along on their way. She turned away again into the room and shivered, though a fire was burning brightly in the grate, its flames casting fantastic shadows on the walls.

It was not that dull, gray sky that had sent a chill to her heart, nor the dolorous, dismal weather; it was because her eyes fell upon a satin skirt that had been thrown carelessly over the back of a chair, the seed-pearls in the embroidery glistening in the light, the long white veil hanging over it like a puff of smoke.

It was a part of her wedding-dress, and as her eyes fell on the cream-white folds, she shuddered as though she had been confronted by a spectre. She could hear the scurrying of many feet in the great hall below, and the rattle of hammers. The decorators, she knew, were at work on the walls, preparing for the ball in the evening. Above the noise and clatter she heard her father's voice directing the workmen. After a few moments he knocked at her door and entered. He looked a little pale and worried, though he tried to conceal his nervousness by appearing cheerful.

"I wish you would come down-stairs, Marsh," he said, looking at her a little suspiciously. "I want you to see if these fellows are doing things right. This affair's going to cost me a pretty penny, and I don't want it to be a fizzle."

She did not seem to be paying any attention to his words, but kept her eyes fixed on a pattern on the carpet.

"Why do you give this party?" she asked, at length.

"Well," he gasped, sinking into a chair, "that is a pretty question to ask. I declare, Marsh, you do vex me sometimes,

you really do. Why do I give it? Why, in honor of your marriage."

"In honor of my marriage?" she said slowly.

"That's what I said."

"There is no honor about it. It's a dishonor!" she exclaimed, with sudden vehemence.

Then, in a gentler mood, she went over to her father and put her arm around his neck. He would not look at her; he could not.

"Papa."

"Well, Marsh?" his clear, business-like voice quavered.

"You've always been good to me."

"I've tried to."

"And yet, for all that, you are willing to sacrifice me now—to give me to a man I can never love."

"But, dear, didn't I tell you?"

"Yes, yes," laying a hand on his lips. "I know you told me that we should be ruined, that we were in Captain Shrike's power, that we lived in the shadow of the sword, and that he could ruin our lives. You have not told me what this secret was, and I will not ask you; but there must be some alternative. I would do anything to save you from harm, but the price is so much to pay,—my life, my youth, my happiness, all ruined;" she covered her face with her hands, and one choking sob escaped her. "Listen, papa," she said; "let us go away from here to some spot where no one will know us, and where we can live in peace. If you have wronged any one, make what reparation you can, and let us start fresh with a clean page before us. Let Captain Shrike speak out; we will only laugh at him. At best, he can only rob us of money; he cannot take me away from you. We shall be together, and can defy the world." She had spoken rapidly, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright.

John Tillingshurst shook his head sadly. "You don't know what you ask, Marsh. This man has it in his power to trample me under foot, to make me an outcast and a pariah. Don't think I haven't sorrowed for you and tried not to give up; but it's no use fighting such odds. Just think of all the years I lived like a dog, and scrimped and starved and toiled to get where I am now. Oh, you don't know what it is to ask a man

to begin life again at my age, after fighting such a hard fight."

"But it will all come out some day, this secret," she faltered, "and then it will be too late;" and there was a moan in her voice.

"But what do you object to in Captain Shrike?"

"Everything; I don't love him."

"Well, there is no saying that you won't. He's good-looking, smart, and he loves you enough for both."

"Ah, what does such love amount to, when he would force me into marrying him against my will."

"Well, that's the military in him. He wants you at any price, even if he has to declare war. Come now, Marsh, be reasonable. There's many a girl in Murray Hill would be glad of a chance to step into your boots; now, make no mistake. There's Fanny Pixley, who, I know, would give her eyes to be Mrs. Captain."

She wrung her hands and made no reply.

"I couldn't back out now, Marsh, if I wanted to," he said half apologetically; "all the invitations out and the trousseau bought. Why, New York would never get over laughing at me."

He looked at her curiously, as she did not answer, and something like a wave of regret swept through his mind. He came near her and stood for a moment looking at her with downcast eyes. She was the figure of a sorrowing Niobe.

"You—you ain't so very angry with me, now, are you, Marsh?" he asked, reaching out a great pudgy hand, and stroking her hair softly.

"No, papa," she said listlessly, avoiding his caress.

"And you will come down in a bit and see to them decorations?"

"Yes, papa."

"That's a good girl."

He kissed her on the forehead in a clumsy way, and slouched out of the room, never looking back. If he had done so a moment later, he would have seen his daughter kneeling by the bed, her hands clasped over her face, convulsed in a paroxysm of weeping.

How that dreary day passed she never knew exactly. She

remembered going down-stairs for a few moments, and hearing, half in a dream, her father's voice as he asked her advice about decoration, and she remembered replying something; but that was all.

She had tried to be calm, but there was too much despair in her heart. This party given in her honor seemed to bring that dreadful marriage-day so near that she could not think of it without a shudder. Under the pretence of a headache, she managed to escape to her room, away from her garrulous father, with his clumsy efforts at sympathy.

When the evening came she dressed herself, and was surprised to see how pale she looked. The dress had been ordered for the occasion from Pingat, and was a marvel of white satin and lace. She looked like a statue moulded out of snow when she had put it on. It was ten o'clock, and the guests were beginning to arrive when she came out of her room. The great logs were burning in the open fire-place in the hall. She stopped for a moment to warm her hands in the blaze, though it was oppressively hot. Captain Shrike came in as she stood there.

"You are shivering as if you had a chill, dear," he said, taking one of her hands in his. "Come now, this won't do, you know. We shall have to have a dance, if only to warm you up."

"I shall not dance to-night," bending again towards the blaze, and putting one foot on the brass railing about the fireplace.

"Not dance! But—but what will the guests think?"

"I do not care."

"Ah, well," biting his lip, for he had a quick temper, "do as you please, Marcia; but it will only give everyone something to talk about. At least you ought to dance with me once, considering circumstances."

"You will soon have it in your power to command me to obey you," she said, bitterly.

He looked at her for some moments suspiciously.

"Marcia," and he seized her arm tightly, "I know why this marriage is repugnant to you."

"Let me go; you are hurting my wrist," she said weakly.

"Not until you have heard me."

"Well, I am listening."

"You love this man who calls himself Brent. I know it, I read it in your eyes. You love him yet."

A slight flush passed over her pale face, her arm trembled on his, but in a moment she had collected herself.

"You are a clairvoyant, Captain," with a light laugh. "Let us join the guests."

"She loves him; I know it," said Captain Shrike to himself, as he led the way to the stairs. A seething noise came from below, the babble of many voices. The rush had begun.

Marcia had recovered herself, and a slight flush of excitement tinted her pale cheek a delicate rose. The captain straightened himself up and gave his moustache an extra twist. They passed the gauntlet of fashionable inspection, looking the very *beau ideal* of a handsome and devoted pair, as they entered the main hall leading to the ball-room. No one could have known that anything had happened.

"So distinguished!" said the ladies, referring to the captain.

"Lucky devil!" said the men, looking at Marcia.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. TILLINGHURST'S BALL.

Mr. TILLINGHURST stood leaning against the bronze Psyche that held aloft a lantern of many colors, at the foot of the broad stairway, the lights from the colored glasses giving his bald head a strange striped effect, and distorting his smiling countenance into a fantastic expression as grotesque as a Greek mask.

He had never in all his career had such a number of distinguished people under his roof before, and it was very likely that he never would again, for a great many who secretly scorned him had been drawn there that evening because there was a gloom over society, and his ball was the only social event at the time. Tillinghurst knew it too, perhaps, and tried to get all the amusement he could by circulating freely among the guests, with a word for everyone, and particularly for those exclusive Knickerbocker ladies who he knew detested him.

He was certainly entitled to some enjoyment on that occasion, for he had spent his money without stint. A canopy of glacier blue satin, looped up at intervals with silver stars, transformed the three great parlors into a spacious tent, while the walls were hidden with flowers set close together in intricate patterns, illuminated here and there by tulips and tiger lilies of glass, in which electric lights were burning. The four corners of the room were filled with banks of Gloire de Dijon roses, in the midst of which tiny perfumed fountains sent up their jewelled spray; while in the conservatory, close-hidden by a small grove of lemon trees in bloom, a string band filled the air with voluptuous melodies. Tillinghurst persuaded himself, not without the aid of an occasional glass of amber sherry during the evening, that he was a very happy man; that he was doing just the best thing in the world for Marcia's happiness, though she might not be aware of the fact; and

that he ought to be very proud of getting such a distinguished-looking son-in-law. When, through the mazes of the crowd, or the shifting changes of that kaleidoscopic gathering, he came upon his daughter and saw how pale and cold and listless she looked, he felt very much like a coward, and sneaked away from the sight of her mournful, reproachful eyes. But he had gone too far now to retreat; the marriage must and should take place.

The guests there that night saw, in their smiling host, only the counterfeit presentment of a prosperous self-made man, whose millions gilded all his faults and all his sins of omission. But John Tillinghurst saw beyond the shifting, gay-colored crowd that thronged his parlors. He saw a thin, ragged, hungry-looking man, with a box on his back and another in his hand, who toiled up steep stairs and prowled about dingy offices and crawled home to a kennel late at night, where he supped on stale bread and staler beer, and laid down to troubled sleep.

As his memory went wandering back into the mazes of that miserable by-way of his life, the broker shuddered, and he took another turn through the parlors to assure himself that he was really and truly the owner of the house, and not that outcast of old.

What was it that had turned his thoughts towards those old days which he had been so glad to bury? Was it the sight of Marcia's pleading eyes, or the bold face of Captain Shrike, his son-in-law elect by compulsion, the man who held his future in the hollow of his hand, who could drag him down to the old level of misery and want?

After such unpleasant memories Mr. Tillinghurst had again recourse to the sherry. Why the devil did they keep rising in his mind, on that evening above all others, when he wanted to be gay and joyous, and get his money's worth of real blooded society?

He ran into Captain Shrike in the hall, and looked at him curiously.

"Why don't you try to cheer Marcia up a bit?" he asked. "Seems to me she's the only one in the place who is not having a good time."

"The best way for me to cheer her up, I think," said the

captain grumpily, "is by not going near her. I left her with Freddy Pixley when I found I couldn't get a word out of her except yes or no."

"Oh, she'll come round, never fear."

"It will take a long time, I am afraid. Tillinghurst, you deceived me in this matter. You said the girl liked me, you know you did."

"As a friend, certainly; but she's just as likely as not to hate you as a husband. I tell you what, Shrike; you don't know how to court a girl; now, when I was waiting on her mother—"

"Oh, bosh!"

"Well, anyhow, you must go slow. Marcia's had pretty much her own way all her life, and she don't want to be broken to harness in too great a hurry. She's high-strung, and'll baulk every time. You military fellers are all fire and fury. She'll come round, you mark my words."

"I hope so," said the captain slowly. "You, John Tillinghurst, have every reason to bring this match to a successful issue."

The millionaire shivered. "I wish it was all over," he said, and he meant it.

"And I too. I love her, Tillinghurst, and I'll do the best I can for her. I may have forced you to give her to me, but I had to have her at any cost."

"I might have done worse," said the other doubtfully. "It's the first time I ever forced her to do anything."

He left Shrike alone and passed on, glad to get away from a subject that troubled his conscience.

In the hall a man in full dress, with sharp black eyes, stopped to speak to him.

"I brought another man with me to-night," he said; "thought there might be work for two."

"That's right, Dawkins, keep a look-out for the light-fingered. There must be about two bushels of diamonds in the room yonder. I never saw a crowd dance so much and enjoy themselves so hearty. The people seem to be glad to get out and have a good time, in spite of the labor troubles. A sneak could make a good haul if he got up in the coat-room."

"Not so much fear about that as there is something else," said Dawkins, significantly.

"What do you mean?"

"Read that," handing a telegram; "I got it from police headquarters as I came up here."

The millionaire laughed as he read it.

"Bosh!" he exclaimed, tossing it back; "I have heard that rumor before."

"But I believe it," said the detective, calmly.

"What would you have me do? Dismiss the guests? Get up before them all and announce that Fifth Avenue is besieged, and that they must fly for their lives? Well, that is a good joke!" and he laughed uproariously.

"We shall see something," said the detective, significantly, as he moved away. "And you cannot blame me if there is trouble, Mr. Tillinghurst; you have been warned in time."

The millionaire shrugged his shoulders, and returned to the ball-room with a smile on his face, but with a strange sinking sensation in his heart. He had seen the clouds hovering over the city before this; were they about to break in storm and lightning?

He did not think of his personal safety; that was last in his thoughts; but he knew that an outbreak of the people meant ruin for all his enterprises, wreckage of all his schemes. In vain he mingled among his guests and tried to speak cheerfully; the words of the detective had strangely disquieted him. He searched for Dawkins, but that worthy had disappeared, leaving only his words behind him to rankle.

"You haven't told us where you are going for your wedding tour," said Fanny Pixley, who was one of the group surrounding Marcia in a corner of the room. "Don't think of Europe! Some friends of mine tried the trip, and they got so disgusted with each other on the way over that they applied for a divorce on arriving in Liverpool."

"I haven't thought of the matter at all," said Marcia, slowly. Her head ached, and she would have been glad to have escaped from Fanny's chatter.

"Why, I should think that would be the very first thing you would think of," piped Miss Pixley, little thinking of the pain she was unconsciously inflicting. "I am sure if I had

such a pretty lot of dresses as you have, I should want to go to some real gay place to show them off. I wonder how it is that people are always able to tell a newly-married couple. It must be dreadfully embarrassing, don't you think so?"

But Marcia did not want to think of anything about that dreadful marriage that hung over her like a sword of Damocles. She was even glad when the garrulous Mrs. Wilton came tripping forward on General Seaton's arm, wonderfully clad in orange and purple brocade, that gave her a barbaric appearance.

"Aw don't know when aw've enjoyed a ball so much, my deah Miss Tillinghurst," twittered the widow. "It reminds me of the birthday party given in my honor at Belair, when I danced the cotillon with Lord Oxenford."

"How long ago was that, Mrs. Wilton?" asked Fanny Pixley, who detested her, and never lost an opportunity of saying something disagreeable.

"When was it?" repeated Mrs. Wilton, slowly. As she was making the story out of the whole cloth, it took her some time to think. "Ah—Ah was a mere child at the time," she said, hesitatingly. "Ah think about eighteen. Just ten years ago," with a simper.

"Oh, Mrs. Wilton!" exclaimed Fanny, with an expression of mock dismay.

"What, child?"

"You said only last night that you didn't come to Belair to live until you were twenty-two."

Mrs. Wilton looked as if she would like to throttle Miss Pixley then and there, but she contented herself by saying: "Ah never was much at remembering dates, anyway, but I have got everything down in my diary at home."

"Everything?" asked Fanny, significantly. "Oh, now, my dear Mrs. Wilton, I do hope you will let me see it. I should think it would be dangerous for a woman to trust everything to a little book."

Mrs. Wilton looked at her so viciously that Fanny paused in dismay.

"General," said the widow, turning to her gray-haired slave at her elbow, "I dare say you have not forgotten that delightful night at Belair."

"It could not be forgotten," said the general. "I have described the occasion in my book, 'Social Life in the South.' You must really let me send you a copy, Miss Tillinghamurst."

Marcia, who had only caught a word here and there of the conversation, thanked him.

"Ah, those were palmy days," sighed Mrs. Wilton.

"I think," pursued the general, "that my book will be found a great help to society people up north, in suggesting amusements of an interesting character."

"You ought to be able to give us some points in flirtation, General," said Fanny Pixley, with a significant look at the widow. "Southern men have such a reputation as lady-killers."

The general paid no attention except to scowl. "This ball, Miss Tillinghamurst," he continued, "is the most tasteful that I have attended this winter. It really—it really compares favorably with those I have attended in Charleston," with overwhelming emphasis.

"It's very kind of you to say that, General Seaton," said Marcia feebly, wishing she was in bed. "Papa was very anxious that it should be a success."

Why did they not go away and bore some one else?

"And there is supper," exclaimed the widow, who had a rare faculty for being able to scent a dinner through a key-hole, and now was all impatience to descend on the viands.

Mrs. Wilton's scent was correct, for in a moment the folding-doors on the opposite side of the hall were thrown open, disclosing a long table, glittering with cut glass, and gold and silver plate, while on either side two rows of stolid men in black stood in dignified repose.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilton, overcome with rapture; and she dragged the general away, just as he was launching forth into an eloquent description of a book he had written or was going to write or something; and she never let him go until he had found her a seat near the board's head, whose gilt tusks shone diabolically at one end of the table.

Marcia was glad of the respite, and took Captain Shrike's arm almost with a sense of pleasure when he came towards her. "You will think me very rude for not dancing with you

this evening," she said, half apologetically, "but my head aches terribly."

"I thought you did not look well," he said kindly. "I dare say this noise and worry were too much for you."

The crowd, weary of the dance, surged into the great dining-room, and filled its every nook and corner with glistening silks and satins and oily-looking broadcloths. The clatter of dishes and clashing silver, the popping of corks, and the gurgling of pouring wine drowned the sounds of ordinary conversation.

Mrs. Wilton, safely ensconced near the head of the table, kept three waiters attending to her wants. As Freddy Pixley remarked, "The camel is laying in a supply;" and certainly her stowage capacity seemed unlimited.

As soon as the wines made their appearance, Captain Shrike drank early and often, and was soon in such a pleasant frame of mind that he did not notice whether Marcia sulked or not. He was chatting noisily with Fanny Pixley, and some of his stories, related in rather a loud voice, caused some of the genuine old Dutch descendants who sat opposite to him to seek refuge in smelling-salts very frequently, and to regard him with looks of refined horror.

Shrike was just reaching for his fifth glass of champagne, when the distant booming of cannon was heard, and the sound of fire-arms.

Tillinghurst, who was raising a glass of wine to his lips, turned deadly pale, and let it fall with a crash on to his plate, where it shattered noisily.

The eyes of every one were turned on him wonderingly. What was the trouble? He was quivering as if in a fit. Just at that moment a noise was heard in the hall. Dawkins, spattered with mud and dressed as a common laborer, pushed by the frightened flunkeys and stood before the astounded guests.

"Go home while there is time," he cried, hoarsely. "Lock yourselves in. The police have been overpowered, and the mob is hurrying towards Murray Hill!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST IN THE DINING-ROOM.

IF the detective had announced that the house was about to fall and overwhelm them, he could not have struck more terror into the hearts of that brilliant gathering. The words had scarcely left his lips when a mad rush was made for the doors. The agonized screams of the women as they were trampled under foot by the men, and the noise of breaking glass and falling furniture, were a fit accompaniment to that wild stampede.

All sense of friendship was forgotten in the struggle. The great table, with its weight of crystal and plate, was overturned, and littered the Persian rugs with a glittering débris. The candelabras, broken on the floor, poured little rivulets of fire through the fallen mass, and one end of the satin tablecloth burned slowly where it had caught flame from a candle.

In two minutes the room was clear of people. Only a satin slipper here and there, a shred of blood-stained lace, a crushed bouquet, or a gleaming jewel, told the story of the struggle that had taken place.

Still John Tillinghurst stood at the head of the table, his eyes half closed, as if unconscious of the terrible scene that had just occurred, just as he had stood when the distant booming of the cannon had sent that dreadful chill to his heart. He was like a man in a dream, so still, so calm he stood in the midst of that glittering ruin—the broken glass and the gold and silver plate, the crushed, wine-drenched flowers, the candles burning smokily on the floor, and filling the dim-lit cavernous room with a misty blue vapor.

Some one touched him on the arm, and then he started with a sudden gasp of fear.

Marcia stood before him, pale as a spectre, her hair falling loosely about her face, where it had escaped its fastenings, her

hands bleeding where she had been trampled down among the broken bits of glass from the table.

He looked at her as if he had never seen her before.

"Come," she said, huskily, clutching at his sleeve. "You must not stay here. You have enemies in that mob. They would kill you if they found you."

"Where is Shrike?" he asked, slowly.

"Gone—gone like the rest."

"Coward!" muttered the old man between his teeth.

"But hurry, papa," she urged, trying to rouse him up; "hurry; there is no time to be lost. A few moments and it may be too late."

"Do you think I'm afraid o' those curs?" he muttered. "Why, I'll make 'em get down and lick the dust for this. See if I don't. I own a thousand of 'em, and they shall pay me back in blood;" and his eyes glittered with that ominous light which his enemies knew so well meant mischief.

"But we must not waste time here," Marcia urged, trying to drag him away towards the door. "Nothing you could say would make any impression on these infuriated men. They want your life, and they will have it. Oh, come before it is too late!"

"I built this house with my money," he growled stubbornly. "I can't give it up for those devils to ruin. You go, Marcia, and don't be afraid of me. I'll stick here as long as there's a stone left in the walls; and let 'em come on, damn 'em, if they will."

Marcia was ready to faint with despair. She kneeled down weakly at his feet, leaning against a corner of the overturned table to keep herself from falling.

"Then I will stay here and die with you," she said, in a faltering though determined voice.

He looked at her doubtfully in his stupid way.

"No—you—you mustn't. They're a rough lot, and they might not respect a woman. Go, Marcia, and leave me to face these devils alone. I've done it before, and by God, I can do it again," setting his teeth together in the old vicious way.

"I will only go with you, papa. Oh, rouse yourself," shaking him by the arm; "there is still time for us to get away."

She crawled over to the window and threw up the curtain. A bright moonlight filled that strange disordered room with its weird light. She opened the window and looked out on the street. It was silent as a street in a dead city, only from the direction of down-town came an occasional sound of fire-arms and the rattle of drums. The sky was tinged an ominous red from burning buildings. To Marcia it looked like a sea of blood.

She closed the window again and turned to her father. He had not moved, standing as still as if stupefied. She crawled over to the buffet, the only piece of furniture that had not been overturned in the struggle, and poured out half a glass of brandy from the decanter. He drank it greedily, and then for the first time a slight flush came back into his pale cheeks.

"Are they coming?" he asked.

"Yes, in a moment they will be here," she cried. "There is not a moment to be wasted. Come," she said, half supporting him; "we shall escape yet."

"Yes, yes, Marsh, we will go," murmured the old man.

"Hurry, hurry!" she cried, urging him on. "Did you hear that?" as a defiant yell only a few blocks away sent a shudder to her heart. "If they find us here it means death."

Half supporting and half pushing him, for Mr. Tillinghurst acted like one palsied, they made their way slowly and painfully over the disordered floor, with its broken plate and ragged bits of cut glass.

The terror of the situation gave strength to the weak, almost fainting girl. It was not so much her own life she feared to jeopardize, but his, this father who would have given her over shamelessly to the arms of a man she loathed. They had made their way painfully towards the door leading out into the hall, when Marcia started back with a cry of dismay.

A man dressed in greasy overalls and a jumper, his face smudged with lamp-black, stood in the hall surveying them calmly, silently.

Marcia shrank away as he advanced. A feeling of faintness came over her. Her brain seemed on fire as she clutched blindly at the wall to keep herself from falling. Still the man advanced towards them.

“Don’t be alarmed, Miss,” he said huskily; “I’ve come to save you both.”

Marcia’s heart gave a glad leap.

“You—you here, John Brent?”

“Yes; who else should be with you now?” he said.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ESCAPE.

It was no time for either Brent or Marcia to be sentimental. From the street they could hear the hoarse shouts of the mob and the tramp of many feet. To linger, even for a moment, in the house meant certain death.

"We must leave the house at once," said Brent, authoritatively. "Your father seems stupefied—here, let me help you." He thrust Marcia aside and then took hold of the old man's arm. "To the roof," he said to Marcia, pointing upstairs; "it is our only hope."

She went on ahead, only stopping now and then to turn her head to look back at her father, expecting every moment to see the furious mob pour in the doorway and call to them to stop. Brent's presence, however, gave her new courage, though he seemed to avert his eyes every time she tried to look him straight in the face. Now that he was there to help her father along, they made rapid progress. Tillinghurst still seemed loath to leave his home, but Brent firmly but kindly urged him on for his daughter's sake, and he obeyed reluctantly. They had reached the fourth floor in safety, when a howl was heard from the street in front of the house, and the stamping of many feet and the rattle of fire-arms.

"Quick—quick!" cried Brent, pushing Mr. Tillinghurst up the short flight of steps leading to the skylight. Marcia could not lift the trap, it was so heavy. Brent, as he helped her, touched her hands by mistake, and started visibly.

Did he hate her so, she wondered?

They had just gained the roof, and closed and fastened the trap, when a howl of rage from the mob in the street assured them that the house had been vacated just in time.

From their high place on the roof, the fugitives saw down the street a seething mass of humanity waving torches and screaming hoarsely, while the sound of breaking glass told

the story that they were smashing the windows of the houses they passed by.

Tillinghurst was trembling fearfully, and Brent made haste to hurry his charges away from the sight of the crowd in the street. In the direction of Madison Square they saw that the air was filled with sparks from burning buildings, and that all the sky was tinted a deep, lurid red.

They made their way with difficulty over the uneven roofs, and several times Marcia came near falling, if Brent had not been there to lend her assistance, though he had his hands full in taking care of her father.

So, by painful degrees, they made their way over the house-tops until they reached the corner of Sixth Avenue, and stood now on the top of a small French flat that had been lately built, and was still in an unfinished condition. Brent, who seemed to be perfectly familiar with the ground, led them down through the trap in the roof to the top floor of the building. At the end of the hall a fire-escape led into a narrow court, littered with lumber and a débris of building material.

"Can you go down that ladder alone, do you think?" Brent asked Marcia. "It is our only chance."

"I will try," she said; and though trembling all over from the effects of the recent excitement, she commenced to cautiously make the perilous descent, while Brent watched her eagerly.

"When are we going home?" asked Mr. Tillinghurst feebly; and Brent was reminded that he had a still greater charge on his hands to care for.

"Soon, very soon, I hope," the young man tried to say cheerfully.

If the millionaire had been taking a narcotic he could not have acted in a more stupefied way than he did.

Brent shook him rather forcibly by the arm: "We must go down that ladder," pointing to the fire-escape; "do you think you are strong enough to make the effort?"

"I—I—I'll try, John," he said, feebly.

Brent took a rope out of his coat pocket, and making a noose out of it, slipped it over Mr. Tillinghurst's arms, and then fastened it securely to his own waist. With a few soothing and comforting words, he persuaded the old man to attempt the

descent. A moving white figure at the bottom of the ladder assured him that Marcia was safe, but was watching them anxiously.

How long it took to go down that ladder! To Brent it seemed hours. Twice Tillinghurst slipped, and would have fallen if the rope securely tied to Brent's waist had not saved him from a terrible death on the flagging below.

Marcia gave a sigh of relief as the two black figures, clinging like giant flies to the narrow ladder, came nearer and nearer, and at last stood beside her.

Brent, who had evidently arranged everything beforehand, dragged out of the great rain-spout that ran down the side of the flat a long black mantle, with a hood, and a pair of felt slippers.

"Put these on," he said to Marcia; "your ball dress would attract attention, and we are not out of danger yet."

The white satin slippers, embroidered with seed-pearls, were exchanged for the more homely ones of gray felt. Brent pretended to hide the ones she had taken off in a box of shavings near by, but he found a chance to slip one of them into his pocket, as Marcia was wrapping herself up in the cloak.

The old broker had no hat on his head, so Brent took off the greasy Kossuth he was wearing, and put it on Tillinghurst's head, turning up the collar of the old man's dress suit at the same time, and pinning it securely together at the throat.

In that uncertain light no one would have been able to recognize the millionaire and his daughter; and, to aid their flight, a heavy fog had arisen that made even common objects indistinct.

Thus equipped they set out, Brent holding on to the broker to help him along, with Marcia, on the other side of her father, trying, weak as she was, to aid his uncertain footsteps. The streets through which they passed were silent and deserted; only from the direction of Murray Hill came hoarse cries and the occasional sound of firing.

"This isn't the way home, is it?" asked Mr. Tillinghurst, querulously.

"Yes, yes," Brent replied; "it takes longer to get there on account of the fog."

The old man mumbled as if he had some doubts about the matter.

So they led him along down the avenue, as if he had been a wayward child; and only now and then he stopped to express a fear that they had lost their way; but a few words readily soothed him.

The fog was so thick when the little party at last arrived at Fourteenth Street, opposite Macy's, that Brent could hardly see the outlines of the elevated station.

They made their way east now, as cautiously and as silently as possible, for the red blots in the mist warned them that they were approaching a dangerous neighborhood. Union Square was one of the rallying-places of the mob, Brent knew; but he was in hopes that they had by this time scattered to the upper part of Fifth Avenue, where their field of vengeance lay.

The red spots in the mist grew brighter as they neared the square, but whether the light proceeded from bonfires or from torches in the hands of the rioters, Brent could only speculate.

Crossing University Place, some black object came lurching along through the mist, and ran straight into them.

A man rather uncertain in his steps and dressed in a long cloak looked at them and then swore mildly. Slung across his shoulder he had a gun, which wobbled so in his nervous fingers that it looked as if it might fall at any moment and explode.

"Wash dish?" he exclaimed, unsteadily laying one hand on Brent's shoulder, and trying to keep his head steady enough to look at the young man. "Why ze deveil ain't you up-town shtead o' mousin' round here, heh?" lurching forward heavily. "Heh?"

"Well, you see, my family followed me out on the barricades," said Brent, with a laugh, "and I'm getting them home."

"Right ye be, ole man," roared the other, "No place for old folks when patriots lay out despots. But who'sh girl?" looking at Marcia curiously; "who'sh gal?—she ain't ole folk'sh—not by damn side—she ain't ole folk'sh."

He reeled forward as if he wanted to put his arm around her, but Brent interposed in a good-natured way.

"Here—here, fair play!" he said; "that's my wife;" and Marcia little knew the pain the words cost him to utter.

"Your wife, eh? Well, all I got to shay is, you got bully good taste; if you haven't, d—— me. But shay," getting his arm affectionately about Brent's neck; "you get your folksh home as soon as you can, for there's goin' to be a high old time up the avenue, pretty soon. The boys is went up there to drag old Tillinghurst out of his cage—an'—an' when they get him, they're—they're goin' to make him eat that notice about not takin' strikers back, and then they're goin' to—to—"

"Oh, I'll be there," interrupted Brent, with a laugh, fearing that Tillinghurst, who seemed to wake up at the sound of his name, would betray them.

"But what's matter wish ole man?" asked the sentry, looking suspiciously at the old broker.

"Oh, never mind him," Brent returned; "little gone up here," tapping his forehead significantly.

"I see—I see," mumbled the other. "Shay, you don't happen to carry a flask, do you? Thish patriotism is might' dry worksh."

"I've got what is just as good," said Brent, laying a silver dollar in the man's dirty palm.

"Come along," cried that worthy, dragging Brent along by the arm. "We'll go and fill up at Mrs. Muggins'—an'—an' then we'll go and see the aristocrats burn; yes, see 'em burn."

"Not to-night, old man," said Brent, gently; "I have to get my folks home; but I will see you later. Go and drink on me to the success of the cause."

"I'll drink to anything," said the inebriate, staggering away. "Now, you come back," he bawled through the fog; "for I'll wait for ye;" and then the mist blotted him out.

"A narrow escape," gasped Brent, as he hurried them along. "If I am not much mistaken we have passed the worst danger."

At the corner of Third Avenue Marcia started with a cry of fear. The body of a man was swinging to-and-fro from a lamp-post. Brent hastily dragged the fainting girl away from the terrible sight. They hurried down the avenue as rapidly as they could now. The fog had turned from a dull gray to a sickly yellow, and they knew that the morning was slowly

breaking. Marcia and Brent felt a great sense of relief when they finally turned down the familiar little side-street and came in sight of the black blot they knew was Bolger's Court.

For once the dingy old rookery was silent, and if the dirty entrance had not been so familiar, Brent might have imagined that he had lost his way and strayed into the wrong house. Every one in the place apparently, including the noisy Mr. Bowker, had rushed to the centre of the excitement on upper Fifth Avenue. Brent could not have chosen a better retreat for his friends, for no one would have thought of finding the millionaire and his daughter under the same roof that sheltered their enemies.

Kindly-faced Mrs. Skerritt was standing on the first landing, shading a candle with one hand, as the fugitives entered.

"I was afraid something had happened to ye," she said, looking at the two critically. "Dear, dear, but these is terrible times; and to think that my Joe should be mixed up in it! Ah, Miss, it's a sorry day for ye's all; I'm afraid them villains won't leave a stone of yer beautiful house standin'."

"Never mind about the house, Mrs. Skerritt," said Marcia, hastily. "I'm not so worried about that as I am about my father."

"And what might ail the poor gentleman?" holding her light near the old man's face. "Is he sick?"

"Yes, the shock has been too much for him; a few days' rest with proper care is all he needs. Have you any place you can put us?"

"Ah, Mr. Brent saw to that," exclaimed Mrs. Skerritt, as she led the way up the stairs; "and as I told him, he couldn't have been more particular if he was bringin' home a bride."

Luckily the light was so dim that Brent could not see the tell-tale blush that rose to Marcia's cheek.

The limited resources of the court, always crowded, had been severely taxed to accommodate the expected guests. Brent had expended quite a sum of money out of his limited store in fixing up his room, which Marcia was to occupy, in a suitable manner. And Joe's room, where her father was to lodge, had received the same decorative treatment.

Marcia, as soon as she crossed the threshold of Brent's room, knew the hand that had exhibited such taste in covering up

the ghastly walls and transforming it into a cosy nest; and her conscience smote her at every fresh evidence of his unselfish kindness.

"I wanted to say," said Brent, as he paused for a moment in the corridor before leaving her, "that I will sit up with your father; he might get worse during the morning and need a doctor. If you need anything, Mrs. Skerritt is easy to awake."

"I don't think I ought to trouble you so much, Mr. Brent," said Marcia, keeping her eyes on the ground. "You—you have done already more than we had reason to expect."

"I will say good-night," he added coldly, not noticing how tremulous her voice was. "If your father is worse I will take the liberty of rapping on your door;" preparing to go.

She made a step towards him, then paused and hesitated: "You—you will at least let me thank you for what you have done."

"Certainly! Good-night;" how harsh his voice sounded!

"Good-night," she said, with lingering emphasis.

His footsteps echoed down the corridor.

"What a wretch I am!" she sobbed, when she found herself in her room again. "He will never forgive me—never!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GUESTS AT BOLGER'S COURT.

THE latest news from the siege of Fifth Avenue reached Bolger's Court. Mrs. Skerritt, in her trips back and forth to the fountain in the court-yard for water, heard everything that was of interest from the slatternly women whose husbands were with the mob and guarding the barricades.

Marcia was regaled with a detailed description of everything that had happened during the night. The entire avenue, from Madison Square to Central Park, was in the hands of the mob, who had barricaded the side-streets against the approach of other forces, with furniture looted from the houses. The rage of the rioters seemed centred on Fifth Avenue, because some of the richest manufacturers and capitalists, like Tillinghurst, lived there; and the neighbors of these nabobs had to suffer with them, though for no fault of their own. A discrimination, however, was shown in the houses to be sacked; for those marked out for vengeance had each been labelled the night before with a cross in red chalk, a sign of the Reconstructionists; and, except for breaking the windows, the other houses were spared.

In order to arm the mob, the various armories of the city regiments had been pillaged, and the fire-arms distributed among the men. The military power of the city was crippled, and the citizens' made only a few feeble attempts to rescue the unhappy people on the avenue.

So far the mob had sacrificed only a few lives. A police-sergeant who had charged the rioters at the head of a squad of blue-coats had been shot down; and a capitalist who refused to allow his house to be pillaged had been promptly hung from a lamp-post; but his wife and family had been allowed to leave unmolested.

Even the rioters themselves knew that they could not hold the street very long; but a thirst for vengeance against their

oppressors, and the calls of hunger, had driven them into this mad undertaking, and they were enjoying their triumph, even if it was only to be of short duration.

John Brent's time was so occupied looking after his guests that the events of the siege troubled him very little. Mr. Tillinghurst had been delirious all night, and a doctor was found necessary. He had babbled of strange things during his illness, and once or twice Brent had heard his own name mentioned in connection with certain circumstances which set him wondering.

Sitting there, in the dimly lighted room, waiting for the morning, the rich man's talk served to keep him awake. He found himself piecing together the bits of the strange story as they fell from the old man's lips. Each new sentence spoken during the delirium only verified Brent's fears that the helpless man who lay before him, tossing with the fever, was the one who had robbed him of his inheritance. He might have forgiven the loss of the money, but he could not forgive the loss of the woman he loved.

He saw it all now clearly, as he walked up and down that narrow room with quick, nervous strides. Captain Shrike had in some way come into possession of the broker's secret, and had used it to force a marriage with Marcia. It was a great sense of relief to Brent to learn that, after all, she had been driven to act as she did, and that it was not of her own free will.

What if she still loved him? But no! that was too much happiness for him to expect. Yet, somehow, the old love revived within him in all its intensity, and he felt a fresh hope rise in his heart.

He was in a happier mood than he had experienced since the day he turned away from her door in despair.

About ten o'clock in the morning Marcia came in, and seeing how pale Brent looked, insisted on relieving him.

"Did papa talk much during his delirium?" she asked, a little afraid lest Brent might have learned the secret that had been the cause of all the misery.

"A great deal," said Brent evasively, "but so brokenly as to be almost unintelligible. The doctor says he will pull through all right as soon as this fever leaves him. I will go

and see if breakfast is not ready. You must need something strengthening after the adventures of last night."

She let him go without another word. There was something in the quiet way he went about ministering to her comfort, that could not be paid with mere thanks. She was awed by the magnanimous spirit that could suffer as he had suffered, without a word of reproach for the one who had caused all the misery. Why did he look at her in that cold, unrelenting way, whenever their eyes met? Had she not suffered too on account of that wretched marriage affair?

Mrs. Skerritt bustled into the room in a few moments with the breakfast, and Marcia, who was faint from the occurrences of the past twelve hours, was glad of even such plain fare as Bolger's Court provided.

"Has Mr. Brent gone out?" she asked, when Mrs. Skerritt had arranged the breakfast on the table.

"I think he did, Miss. Did you want him for anything?"

"Oh, dear, no," hastily.

"'Cause I think he's stepped around to the market to get some beef to make beef-tea for your father, as the doctor ordered. Oh, he's a rare one for lookin' after other people's wants, is Mr. Brent. My Joe says there ain't another like him in the world;" and the good woman's face lit up with enthusiasm.

"He has a kind heart," said Marcia, simply, pleased and yet pained as she listened to Mrs. Skerritt's praise.

"Well, I should say so. If all the aristocrats was built out of the same stuff as him, we wouldn't be havin' these strikes nor anything like the troubles we're swimmin' in now;" and so she rattled on for some moments, until the arrival of the doctor cut short her garrulity.

The morning passed, but John Brent did not return. Marcia began to be uneasy, to worry about his absence. Her father, however, called for all her watchful care. He was delirious again, and talking in his sleep. His brain seemed full of chaotic visions; he raved about his house, his money, about Shrike. His mind went wandering back in the mazes of memory. He was starving; he was swearing at J. Cummings Rawdon, and snarling at Gredge.

Then a name came up she had never heard before, a name

that he kept repeating over and over again to himself. Then she heard Brent's name; and then, piece by piece, she added sentence to sentence, and knew that he was the man her father had wronged. Tears of shame filled her eyes. She felt doubly guilty now of having wronged Brent. What had he not suffered at their hands! And yet, to make the burden of obligation more, he had saved them from the fury of the mob when every hope was gone. Oh! if he would only come back, she murmured, as she sat there in the darkened room, she would beg his forgiveness even on her knees.

But after awhile, as he did not come, and worn out with watching, Marcia sobbed herself to sleep, a sleep broken with strange dreams, where she saw the menacing face of Brent lifted towards her threateningly.

The object of her thoughts had been spending the day in the interest of his guests, and returned home at evening laden with purchases. Something nice and delicate from the market for Mr. Tillinghurst, and some flowers for Marcia—just the kind he had been wont to send her every day during those brief weeks of their engagement.

He was in a very pleasant mood as he turned into the Court. It was such a delight to be living under the same roof that sheltered the woman he loved, and to be able to minister to her wants. He begrudged the time spent away from her side, and yet, until she made some sign or gave him some token that she loved him still, he did not dare to speak out.

He met her at the head of the stairs. Her face was like death, and she was trembling.

"Have you seen him?" she gasped.

"Who?"

"My father!"

"Is he not in his room?"

"No—no," she sobbed. "God forgive me! I fell asleep this afternoon, and when I awoke he had gone!" And she wrung her hands in despair. "I'm afraid he has gone back to the house," she moaned. "He will be killed!"

"And you have searched the Court thoroughly?"

She nodded dumbly.

"Go back to your room, Marcia—I mean Miss Tilling-

hurst," he said kindly, leading her away from the stairs, "and rest assured that I will find him."

"Where—are—you—going?" she faltered, as he laid his bundles down at his feet.

"To find your father, and bring him back."

"Oh, let me go too," she pleaded.

He shook his head. "It would be impossible. I can cross the lines in safety, but for you it might be worse than death."

"And you are going to risk your life for him? You are going into that murderous crowd?"

"Yes; good-night."

He ran down the stairs, away from her pleading eyes that thrilled him so.

"Jack—oh, Jack!" she cried after him—but he was gone!

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. TILLINGHURST MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

WHEN John Tillinghurst saw that his daughter was sound asleep, he began to act in a very strange way. After looking cautiously about the room for some moments, he slipped noiselessly out of bed so as not to disturb her slumbers, and began to dress himself slowly, keeping an eye on her all the time, and mumbling to himself incoherently.

Though the fever still burned in his face, he knew well enough what he was about, for once, when Marcia stirred in her sleep, he skipped back into bed again, and peered at her for some moments until satisfied that she was not going to wake up. As she continued to sleep he cautiously resumed his toilet.

His dress coat had been carried off by Mrs. Skerritt to be cleaned; but a coat belonging to her son Joe lay on the chair in its place, and the millionaire did not hesitate a moment about putting it on. It took him a long while to dress, because his hands trembled so; but at last he finished the task, and with one farewell look at Marcia, he crossed the threshold and crept slowly and noiselessly down the stairs. He had but one object in view, and that was to get to his house on Fifth Avenue and save it from the mob in spite of everything.

No one seeing him come out of Bolger's Court would have recognized the broken-down old man, with the flushed, feverish face, who looked as if he was just getting over a debauch. His trousers were torn in several places from sliding down the fire-escape the night before, and a dirty, slouched hat covered the upper part of his face, as a stubbly, iron-gray beard hid the lower. Under the circumstances, he looked like a broken-down clerk, as he shuffled on his way, mumbling to himself, and keeping his eyes fixed on the ground. When he arrived at Thirty-fourth Street he walked west until he reached Fifth Avenue. Here he was interrogated by a drunken sentry, but

handing over his watch to the incorruptible patriot, he was allowed to resume his way.

Tillinghurst's eyes brightened as he found himself once more in the old familiar avenue. A frown gathered on his forehead, however, when he saw the changes that had been wrought by the mob. The centre of the street was piled with broken furniture, window curtains, and paintings taken from the houses; and in some places the elegant débris had been fired and was still smouldering. He could not walk a step without coming upon some fresh evidence of pillage; and on one corner a blue-coated policeman was swaying to and fro, suspended from a lamp-post, with an awful expression on his pallid face. Over the marble portico of the Stewart palace some one had written in charcoal in bold characters, "This was the house of a tyrant;" and on the massive oaken door was nailed a blood-red liberty cap.

Tillinghurst saw no one as he shuffled along. He had the whole avenue to himself, and only the rattle of drums from the direction of Madison Square told that the revolutionists were still at their posts.

What had become of the inmates of the brown-stone palaces he passed? If he had cared to look closely, he would have seen pale faces pressed against the basement gratings, where the flower of New York society were waiting with trembling hearts expecting every moment to be summoned out to die.

Some houses that had been marked for pillage had their doors torn off and their windows smashed in, giving glimpses of rich interiors, where the furniture had been broken and the pictures on the walls slashed into ribbons.

On the disordered mind of John Tillinghurst these sights, if he noticed them, made no impression whatever. He was only interested in getting to his own house, being filled with the mad thought that he was still in time to save it from the hands of the mob.

When he finally arrived in front of the elegant stone pile that had been his home, he found that it had suffered more than any mansion on the avenue, and tears of rage filled his eyes. The great oak door, torn from its hinges, lay broken on the sidewalk, and the broad stone steps were piled high with the parlor furniture and bric-a-brac, so smashed that nothing

definite could be distinguished in the many-colored mass, but here and there a scrap of amber-colored satin window-curtains.

A sigh came from the old man's breast as he clambered over the pile laboriously and entered the hall.

Here he found his paintings, the remains of a Meissonier, a Daubigny, and a dozen others, torn up in small pieces and scattered over the tiles.

Everywhere wreck and ruin met his eye. They had spared nothing that could be smashed or disfigured.

The beautiful Broadwood piano that had been Marcia's delight was nothing now but a pile of kindling wood. A naiad by St. Gaudens, that stood in the centre of the drawing-room, looked pathetic with its broken arms; and some facetious hand had tied a dirty red handkerchief over the eyes and written on the pedestal with a bloody finger, "Justice."

Tillinghurst's breast swelled with emotion as he followed in the track of ruin, with eyes wavering and teeth grinding harshly together as he viewed each new outrage.

The old man entered the dining-room last of all, and as he crossed the threshold he thought of the change that had taken place since the night before, when he had stood at the head of the table, the host of one of the most brilliant gatherings the metropolis had ever seen.

The shutters were still closed and the light through a broken pane came reluctantly, as though loth to enter upon that scene of ruin. One sunbeam, striking upon the pile of broken glass and plate and faded flowers, made one bright spot in the midst of the gloom.

Something moving in one corner of the room startled Tillinghurst's attention. He opened a window-shutter cautiously, and keeping close to the wall, crept nearer the dark, vacillating object. He made out slowly the outlines of a man, who was busy at work pouring bottles of brandy, which he took out of the buffet, over a pile of books that he had brought evidently from the library adjoining.

Tillinghurst watched him for some moments as if stupefied, while the man went on busily with his work, tearing up the books and pouring the alcohol over them, mumbling something to himself as he did so.

At last the old man's addled brain succeeded in understand-

ing the situation. This creature in black was about to fire the house, and it was plainly his duty to prevent it. He was about to make some angry exclamation, but suddenly changed his mind, and went over and tapped the bending figure lightly on the shoulder. The stranger jumped forward with an exclamation of fear, and as Tillinghurst stepped back a ray of light from the window fell full upon his face. The incendiary examined it slowly and critically, and then burst into a loud laugh, that was harsh as the bark of a dog.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" he said. "Well, you're just in time to see the fun;" and he again busied himself pouring brandy on the débris.

"What are you going to do?" said Tillinghurst, hoarsely. "I never saw you before;" eying the shabby man for a moment, as if trying to remember his face.

"Oh yes, you have, John Tillinghurst," snarled the other. "Look at me well, and try and think hard;" and he pushed his face close up to the other's, while the words hissed through his teeth. "If you've forgotten me, I've not forgotten you. I am the man that led the mob here last night, and what they forgot to do I'm here to finish up."

"But I never saw you before," quavered the old man, alarmed at the fierce eyes that glared at him like a wolf's.

"You lie," screamed the other, pushing him toward the window till he stood in the light, and all his red, sodden features were prominent. "You know me—I'm old man Bowker."

"I—I—don't; I never heard the name before."

"Look well."

Tillinghurst peered tremblingly into the face so close to his own, and then turned pale.

"Yes, I was J. Cummings Rawdon; now I'm what's left of him," pushing the old man from him. "I am not pretty, am I, Mr. Millionaire? and I owe you one for marring my beauty, and I owe you one for making me crawl. Those were the words. They're burned into my heart. Well, it's your time to crawl now," his face inflamed with hate.

He hastily applied a fusee which he had evidently prepared, to the inflammable pile. A long tongue of flame shot up to the ceiling.

"Stand off!" he cried, as Tillinghurst, trembling with rage,

rushed forward. "I've waited years for this; to-night my score against you will be wiped out."

For a moment the two men stood and glared at each other like wild beasts, then Tillinghurst lifted up a chair, and hurled it with all his strength at Rawdon. With a mocking laugh the other jumped lightly aside, and the next minute he had the old man by the throat and a terrible struggle followed.

Over and over the floor they rolled; the glass cut them, and their hands and faces were bleeding; but still they fought on, while the fire, increasing in volume, filled the air with a heavy, sickening smoke.

Rawdon, whose hands had never lost their deadly clutch on Tillinghurst's throat, saw that the old man was choking, and renewed his efforts to throttle him. In a few minutes he felt the other's hands fall away, limp and impotent, while the eyes were closed as if in death, and his face was ashen gray.

"You made me crawl, eh?" snarled Rawdon, as he got up and spurned his enemy's body with his foot; "well, how do you like some of it yourself?"

The fire was not burning fast enough to suit him, so he busied himself tearing down the window-curtains and throwing them into the flames. He wanted to make sure this time that only ashes would be left of his enemy's home.

At last he had piled on to the fire everything in the room that would burn, and he turned to go. The smoke was now so dense that it made him gasp for breath; but he lingered a moment to feel about on the floor with his foot for Tillinghurst's body. To his alarm he could not find it. He spent several valuable moments in trying to find out if his enemy had crawled away. At last the flames drove him to the door, gasping and choking from the sickening smoke. He put his hand on the knob to turn it, and then his heart grew cold within him. The door was locked!

Tillinghurst, feigning unconsciousness, had crept away when his back had been turned, and had locked him in; and he was caged like a rat in a trap. In vain he pounded and cursed and screamed and battered his head against the door in his mad rage. The stout oaken panels could not be even shaken by the assault. Then, on his knees, he prayed to Tillinghurst to let him out, but the only reply he received was the sound of

mocking laughter, and the crackling of the flames that crept nearer and nearer to him. In his frenzy he dug his nails into the walls, in a vain effort to lift himself above the fury of the flames that reached out their lurid tongues, as if hungry for his life. Slowly, insidiously the tide of fire encompassed him, and enfolded him with a fiery veil. A scream of hopeless agony burst from his lips as he fell down into the flames which he himself had kindled, never to rise again.

The morning broke in mist and rain. The great house was only a pile of smouldering walls, and in front of the black, cavernous doorway an abject figure walked, now sobbing, now laughing and mumbling incoherently to himself.

No one would have recognized in that pitiful object the once dapper financier, John Tillinghurst.

Here John Brent found him after a long search, seated on the horse-block, babbling to himself, his gray hair sodden with rain, his teeth chattering, and his face flushed with fever.

Gently but firmly he led the old man away from the house he had reared with so much pride, now a smouldering ruin.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TWO SHADOWS ON THE WALL.

THE siege of Fifth Avenue ended in forty-eight hours, and only the barricades in the streets and the broken doors and windows of the brown stone and marble palaces told the story of the storm. On the arrival of the troops called out by the governor, the mob had scattered to their holes and hiding-places, and were allowed to go unmolested. The police knew the ringleaders in the revolutionary ranks, and when the time came it would be easy enough to find them.

On the second day the sun set on a city bustling with activity and life, and in the evening the electric lights flashed forth, the elevated trains were running, the telegraph wires had been repaired, and the theatres were opened to a multitude of people, only too eager to forget the troubles they had just passed through.

The approaches to Fifth Avenue were now guarded at every point by Zalinski dynamite guns, and all suspicious characters lingering about the great thoroughfare were locked up if they could not satisfactorily explain their business.

John Brent had removed his guests from Bolger's Court to a quiet little hotel on West Eleventh Street, where the comforts of a home might be enjoyed at a moderate price. Captain Shrike had not been heard of since the night when he showed his bravery by trampling women down in the escape from the Tillinghurst house. A club acquaintance of Brent's was the authority for saying that he had seen that questionable warrior on board of a train for Philadelphia, in company with a burlesque actress who sang at the Alhambra, but he may have been mistaken. Brent did not care to make any investigation to verify the statement, for he hoped he had seen the last of the smug-faced rascal who had played such havoc with his happiness.

Mr. Tillinghurst had not recovered from his experience in

the deserted house, and the doctors all pronounced him hopelessly insane; though there was a possibility that he might in time recover some of his reason. His insanity was of the mildest form, however; and Marcia found no difficulty whatever in managing him, and would not hear of the doctor's proposition to get a nurse.

The events of the past few days had made him a tottering old man, with trembling limbs and wavering eyes, and hair white as snow. He would sit for hours in the sun, babbling to himself and singing, and sometimes he would make some remarks to Marcia which were so well worded that she could hardly believe he was mad at all. But the light in those sunken eyes only flickered for a moment, and then went out; and next he would be singing about his wife, and the old life when he was so miserably poor.

Marcia was so lonely, left to the society of only this poor old man. Brent seldom stayed long when he came to see them now, pleading business as an excuse. He dropped in for a few moments in the morning and evening, to see if there was anything that she wanted, and then hurried away, as if he feared to stay very long in Marcia's company.

One afternoon, by the doctor's advice, she took her father up Fifth Avenue to have a look at the ruins of their home, hoping that the sight of it might serve to awaken some intelligence in his mind.

The fire had cleared out everything inflammable, but the iron and marble stairs and the floors of terra-cotta tiles had resisted the flames, and they were able to enter the blackened, melancholy entrance that seemed like a great fireplace.

She stood a moment deep in thought in the centre of the hall. Here John Brent had stood that night when he saved them from the mercy of the mob. What would have become of them, she thought, with a shudder, if he had not been there to encourage them and point out a way of escape? She sighed deeply. Was she always to come upon some fresh proof of her indebtedness to him—this man she had spurned?

"I'll never give a ball again," quavered Mr. Tillinghamurst, leaning on his daughter's arm. "Just see how they've ruined everything;" and a tear trickled down his pale cheek.

Marcia soothed him as best she could; and as he seemed

very much exhausted from his walk, she fixed him up a place in one corner of the dining-room, where the sun shone brightly, and where he could look out on the passers-by in the street. He was soon wandering in thought again through the old by-ways of his life, and had forgotten all about where he was, as he broke out into a song he had heard, perhaps in his boyhood, keeping time with his long, knobby fingers on the sill.

As he never stirred from his seat until led away by someone, Marcia took a look through the deserted rooms, that now had a pathetic interest to her eyes.

Could that gaping hole in the centre of the drawing-room be the fire-place by which she had sat so many evenings, and skimmed over novels, and idled away her time, and where *he* had come, and they had read Mrs. Browning's sonnets together? Oh! surely this could not be the place, and she could not, in truth, be that happy girl whose heart was thrilled with the words. And Marcia found herself repeating—

“A saddened face beloved did bear,
A heavy heart beloved have I borne
From——”

“This is a sad home-coming for you, Miss Tillinghurst,” said a voice at her elbow.

John Brent stood in the doorway, surveying her curiously; she flushed and lowered her eyes.

“It is harder than I thought,” she faltered. “I did not know before that I had any sentimental feeling for the old house; but remembering what it was—it has a pathetic—a pathetic interest now.”

“It will all be rebuilt, and on a grander scale than ever,” he said cheerfully, coming nearer to her.

“Never by me.”

He gave her a quick, suspicious look.

“Why, Miss Tillinghurst? You surely—”

“Mr. Brent,” she interrupted, her face paling, “it is time that everything should be made clear to you. My father robbed you of your inheritance—yes, robbed you,” as he lifted his hand with a gesture of dissent; “there is no other name for it. I heard the whole story of your wrongs the other day dur-

ing his delirium. He had confessed to me the story of his crime before, and it was the price of Captain Shrike's silence that I should marry him. I did not know that you were the one so cruelly wronged, or I should never have consented—not at any price.”

“You should not credit the ravings of a man in delirium,” said Brent; “you will not surely believe—”

“Mr. Brent,” she cried, facing him, “do you doubt the truth of what I am saying?”

He stammered, and twisted his hat nervously in his fingers.

“I—I wanted to tell you,” she faltered, “that we will give up everything, and that it is a matter of regret that there is not more. I know,” as he was about to speak, “that there are many things that we cannot repay, wrongs that can never be forgotten—but will you not say that at least you forgive?”

She looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes and quivering lips, and his heart bled for her.

“Miss Tillinghurst,” he said slowly, for the words came with difficulty, “I will not attempt to say that I knew nothing of this—this past occurrence; but it is all over now, and I dare say I am all the more of a man for the experience. It will be easier for me to forgive, but not so easy to forget. I cannot let you beggar yourself for my sake; you have a burden in your father now to care for. I am young and strong, and am already assured of a good income. I came to bid you good-bye.”

“Good-bye?” she echoed.

“Yes, I am going to Chicago; I have been offered a splendid chance in business there that I cannot afford to neglect.”

“And you were going away without saying a word about the wrong that had been done you?”

He was silent.

“I am glad that, even at this late hour, there is still time to make restitution,” as she read her answer in his downcast eyes. “You will at least let me have that satisfaction?”

“Since you wish it. But I am sorry that you heard of this story.”

He saw that, to a woman of her pride, it would be an insult to insist on her keeping the money. He had hoped that she would never hear how her father had robbed him. The con-

versation had pained her greatly. He saw that it would be merciful to her to shorten it.

"Let us rejoin your father," he said, after a moment's silence; "he might get into danger if he chanced to move."

Marcia's face flushed greatly, for she had for the time forgotten all about her charge during their conversation. He was only in the next room, however, and they would surely have heard if any danger had befallen him.

As they crossed the threshold they saw the pathetic figure of the old man seated in the window, the sunlight on his white hair and sunken, lustreless eyes, while his nerveless hands were moving about restlessly in the air, as if he were writing imaginary characters.

"I'll have to put up more margin," he murmured, as they entered; "always more margin."

Marcia, absorbed in the sad spectacle, which, though familiar, seemed like a fresh sorrow to her then, did not look where she was going, and tripped over a ragged piece of flooring. She would have fallen if Brent had not caught her in his arms.

"Marcia—Marcia!" he cried, "would you let me go away without a word—and I might never see you again?"

"I have only filled your life with misery," she sobbed; "there is no misfortune that you cannot trace to me or mine—"

"Don't speak of what is past," he said gently, as she disengaged herself from his arms. "We agreed to forget that. Marcia, I thought I could leave you with a simple good-bye, but the sight of that dear old room where we used to meet revived the old memories which I have been trying hard to forget."

"Why are you going away?" she faltered, tapping the floor nervously with her foot. "I—I thought you liked New York."

"I am going away because the woman I love will not say the word to call me back."

He looked at her flushed face and downcast eyes eagerly, as if he expected an answer. It did not come, and he turned with a sigh.

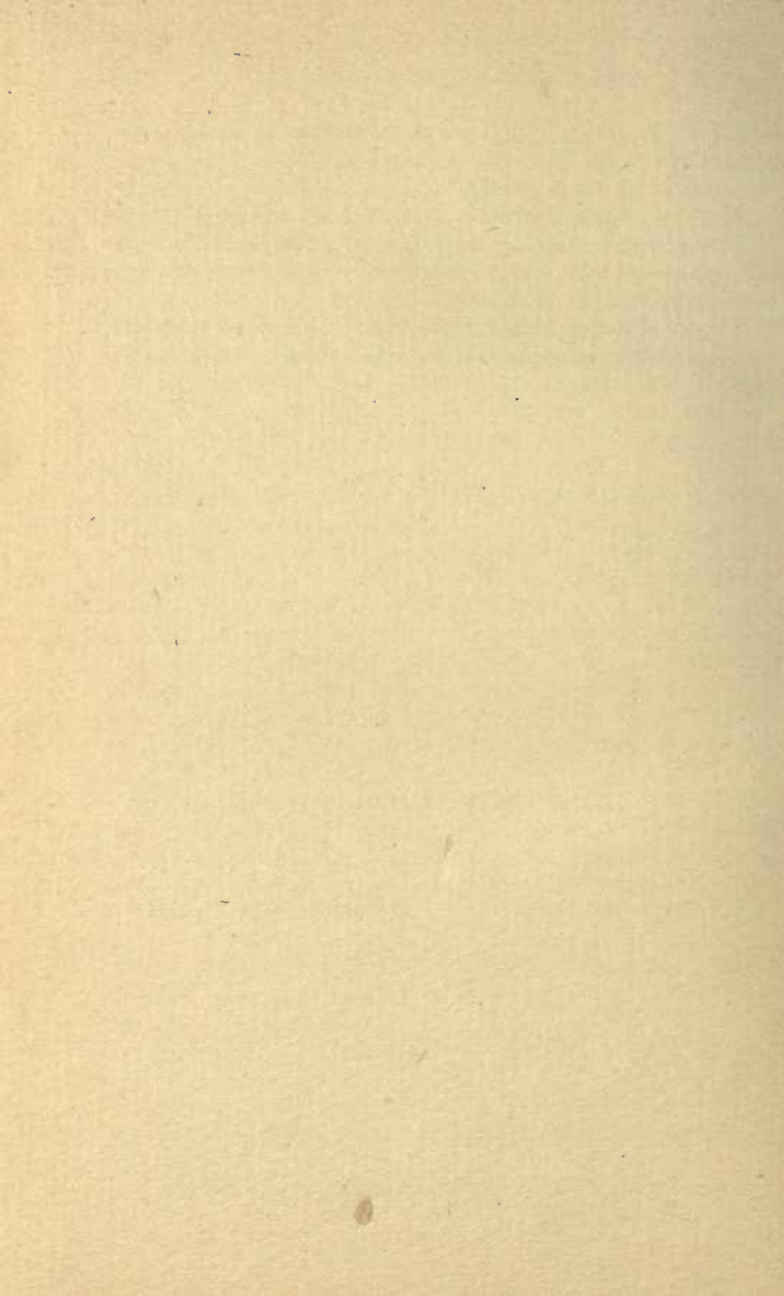
"Good-bye, Miss Tillingham." holding out his hand; "good-bye."

"You shall not go, Jack," the tears gathering in her eyes, as she stepped hastily toward him.

"Marcia!" he cried, gladly.

A shaft of sunlight showed two shadows outlined against the smoke-stained wall, one with upturned face, and the other leaning forward with outstretched arms. Only for a moment the shadows stood in that position, then—

"A risky speculation in futures," murmured the old broker, as he recorded some figures in the air with his nerveless fingers.





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